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# FIRST THINGS

April 1990
Number Two

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

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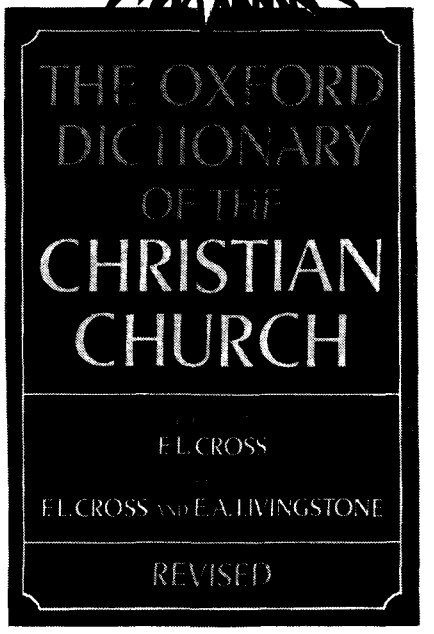


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# FIRST THINGS

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life


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# Correspondence

## Jewish-Christian Dialogue

I have read with a great deal of interest Russell Hittinger's thoughtful review of David Novak's new book, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification* (March). At the very outset of the book, as Hittinger notes, Novak examines three objections to dialogue made by believing Jews. His persuasive theological refutation of these objections is an important dimension of Novak's project, one that deserves greater attention.

It is among the great virtues of Novak's brilliantly argued theological "justification" for dialogue that it comes from a traditional Jewish scholar and from a traditional Jewish religious perspective. In recent years Jewish support for dialogue has primarily come from the most theologically liberal rabbis and scholars. Indeed, since *Nostra Aetate* was promulgated by the Second Vatican Council twenty-five years ago, most Orthodox Jewish thinkers have been openly hostile to any and all theological discussions between Christians and Jews.

One of the most influential Jewish arguments against such dialogue was made in 1964 by the preeminent Orthodox rabbi and theologian, Joseph B. Soloveitchik, at the very time when the deliberations of Vatican II were to add a fresh impetus to Jewish-Christian dialogue in general and Jewish-Catholic dialogue in particular. In an oft-quoted article published in *Tradition* magazine, Soloveitchik concluded that the differences between Judaism and Christianity were so profound that believing Christians and Jews could never enter into meaningful dialogue with one another on matters of theology and faith. While Jews and Christians might cooperate in areas of shared social and political concern, theological encounters should remain off limits.

So compelling were Soloveitchik's arguments to his colleagues in the Orthodox Jewish community that the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America adopted a policy statement discouraging interreligious dialogue. As Novak correctly points out, "Soloveitchik's influence amongst many of the more acculturated traditionalist Jews precluded the participation in dialogue of a large segment of the Jewish community who would have been more disposed toward it and who would have had the best credentials for it in terms of religious commitment and knowledge."

Until now, no traditional Jewish scholar has effectively challenged and refuted Soloveitchik's underlying assumption that traditional Jewish religious practice and participation in theological dialogue with Christians are mutually exclusive. Novak's persuasive argument provides believing Jews—Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike—with the theological insight and erudition with which to refute the arguments of those Orthodox critics, such as Soloveitchik, whose objections to dialogue have for so long gone unanswered.

While Soloveitchik's position had provided many traditional Jews with a theological rationale to shun religious contacts with Christians, Novak has now provided the Jewish faith community with the theological premises upon which to reaffirm them. The publication of Novak's book is thus an important and long-awaited event in the evolution of contemporary Jewish thought and scholarship on Jewish-Christian relations in America. With its many other virtues that Russell Hittinger illuminates in his review, it is a book that should be welcomed and read especially by those believing Jews who have, until now, been reluctant to engage in theological conversations with believing Christians.


Rabbi David Dalin
Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies
University of Hartford


## Christians and Development

Amy Sherman's "Christians and Economic Development" (March) is a sweeping and largely accurate


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reading of existing Protestant views on economic development in the Third World. With many evangelicals, she shares skeptical views of the predominantly leftist, redistributionist orthodoxies that still dominate the hierarchies of many religious bodies active in international development work. Her citation of Gustavo Gutierrez' revisionist statement that "there could be a capitalist liberation theology" is a striking instance of how quickly such orthodoxies are changing, raising new questions about the relationships between economic and theological truths. As evangelicals work toward forming their own contributions to the debate over development in the 1990s, they face the likelihood of immediate successes and long-term difficulties.

Immediate successes, because they have long incorporated entrepreneurial dimensions in their development work, both in fundraising techniques at home and in structuring economic relationships with the Third World. It is hunger for the freedom to create wealth that moves the revolutions of Eastern Europe, which may themselves offer the most responsive ground for such "new" development thinking. Sherman's insights would be expanded by a microeconomic look at entrepreneurial efforts; they exist today on both the left and the right of religious development agencies.

Long-term difficuties, because no other religious group active in international development today retains such a strong commitment to tying together spiritual and material dimensions of development as do evangelical Protestants. . . . The pressures toward a homogenized, secular "goodness" in relief and development matters . . . are often intensified by United Nations' bureaucrats and, for Americans, by the U.S. Government itself.

The postwar consensus on private involvment in state-sponsored relief and development has disintegrated into factional interest-group struggles, struggles that will only be intensified by new pressures to assist development in Eastern Europe. A restructuring of private/public cooperation in these humanitarian matters, planned jointly by private aid providers and the Bush administration, would be very much in order.

Bruce Nichols
Philadelphia, PA

## The Catholic Whig

Michael Novak's genial and full-length portrait of the Catholic Whig ("The Return of the Catholic Whig," March) brings into sharp focus the theological and political concepts that should frame our public debates in the coming decade.

A small addendum, though. Even if recent events signal the triumph of democratic capitalism as an idea, democratic capitalism as a reality has some difficult days ahead in the realm that Novak has elsewhere called "moral-cultural." Catholic whiggery can be an essential resource here, but we should not underestimate the magnitude of the necessary *Kulturkampf*.

True, human persons in community should be valued for their capacities to know and love, but who, outside of highly restricted circles, is willing to speak and defend such language? Paradoxically, our very institutions of higher learning and our culture in general have a deep prejudice against the very idea of true human knowing. Even worse, many intellectuals think that to suggest that a practical *recta ratio* exists is the prelude to fascism. The same people tend to regard metaphysical views *per se* as totalitarian. The only refuge from these dangers, they believe, is a deconstruction of all centers of meaning and authority, though the result is a free-floating human existence they find somehow preferable. As Vaclav Havel wrote of all this from prison before his miraculous rise to the Czechoslovak presidency: "The tragedy of modern man is not that he knows less and less about the meaning of his own life, but that it bothers him less and less."

All of us—in East and West—need to remember the Whig lessons on the necessary balance between person and community. But these very concepts depend on our finding a more Catholic balance in our relating of past and present. For some parts of the world, greater appreciation of human ingenuity and its living actuality is required. For us, living in a society that seems to know and care less and less about the most basic facts of our past, the main task is to counterbalance the tremendous ferment of human creativity with the strong and steady presence of the fertile principles on which creativity is based. The contemporary Catholic Whig in America is forced to oxymoron: how do we recover and perpetuate an innovative tradition?

Robert Royal
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# The Churches and the Cold War

From beneath the rubble of crumbling Marxist tyrannies come voices long silenced. They are voices of rejoicing in new found freedoms, voices of confusion about what to do next, and, as might have been expected, voices of inquiry and accusation. About the most massive and sustained despotism in human history people want to know why it happened and who is responsible.

Accusations put us off. While some may rush to judgment, others shrink from it altogether. They tell us, invoking authority that dare not be denied, "Judge not, that you be not judged." It is good to know that the final judgment is not ours. Yet that same authority cautions us always to be alert, to be discerning the spirits, to live in the awareness that penultimate actions have ultimate consequences. There are many reckonings on the way to the final reckoning. The end of the cold war is such a time of reckoning along the way. The purpose is not recrimination but to establish a more honest record, to hold one another accountable, and to understand the errors and betrayals of the past in the hope that they will not be repeated in the future.

Of course it is not only the churches that are being called to account. For instance, from beneath the rubble comes a remarkable article by M. Zlobina in *Novi Mir*, the official organ of the Soviet Writers Union. Reflecting on Arthur Koestler's classic *Darkness at Noon*, the author notes that some Russian intellectuals believe that, during what she calls the Dark Years, there was a conspiracy by the leftist intelligentsia of the West to hide the horror of Communist oppression. She does not accept that conspiracy theory, but she understands why many do, for the roll of western dishonor is depressingly long. Since 1917, some of the most celebrated writers, artists, and journalists of the West have served as apologists for oppression. "What darkness at noon blinded them?" Zlobina asks. Her question is echoed by a multitude of victims who are now finding their voice.

Zlobina's hypothesis is that the putatively secular intelligentsia of the West was blinded by a need to believe. Admittedly, the suggestion is not original. Paul Hollander has written about the "political pilgrims" who, alienated from their own world, are forever discovering utopia in a world elsewhere. Joseph Brodsky, who speaks with authority about the death camps of the Soviet gulag, puts it this way: "On the mental horizon of every millenarian movement there is always a version of a New Jerusalem. The idea of God's city being within reach is in direct proportion to the religious fervor in which the entire journey originates. The variations on this theme include also a version of an apocalypse, ideas of a change of the entire world order. . . . Naturally, transgressions committed in the name of getting to a New Jerusalem fast are justified by the beauty of the destination."

But surely, one may think, it is different with the churches. After all, the churches presumably have a religion and therefore have no need for the *ersatz* religion of political utopianism. Presumably. The record indicates that, with some churches and many Christians, that cannot be taken for granted.

Sorting things out is not easy, although there are precedents. There have been other times of reckoning after the passing of some great horror. Following the defeat of National Socialism, for instance, there were the Nuremberg trials. In French public life, the wounds of charges and countercharges, of revenges and reprisals, over collaboration with the Vichy regime have not entirely healed to this day. The time of reckoning after the passing of what was aptly called Communism's evil empire will no doubt be different in important respects.

It will be different because there has not been, in the way that there was in 1945, military defeat or unconditional surrender. It will be different, also, because the goal is not the trial and punishment of those who perpetrated crimes against humanity but a peaceful transition from tyranny to free and democratic government. But the time of reckoning at the end of Marxist-Leninism is like the time of reckoning at the end of National Socialism in other respects. Both ideologies—the one of race and tribe, the other of revolutionary class struggle—produced rivers of blood and corpses beyond numbering. Because it lasted so much longer, the Communist toll is much the

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higher, claiming the lives of a hundred million victims or more. But precise count was lost a long time ago. Among the sobering thoughts about this bloody century none is more sobering than that it is the century in which we give or take a million or two, or ten or twenty, in estimating the victims of political madness.

Although their victims were equally dead, or maimed by torture, or desolated by oppression, the two great political madnesses of this century did not provoke equal revulsion in the West. In the past fifty years no decent person hesitated to declare himself an anti-Nazi, but in the past twenty-five years many decent people declared it indecent to be an anti-Communist. That does not mean, to be sure, that such people favored Communism, although many of them professed to admire its "ideals." While differing in their views of Communism, however, such people did agree on the need to be anti-anti-Communist. For the Communists and those who supported their purposes, it was sufficient that most of the elite culture of the West had become firmly anti-anti-Communist.

The postures of the different churches during the cold war depended in large part on their connection to that elite culture. Only the leadership of those churches that some still call mainline had aspirations to belong to that elite. Almost all evangelicals were and are more likely to suspect than to emulate attitudes associated with the elite culture. The Orthodox churches were and are culturally marginal and, given their roots in the East, needed no reminding of the evils of Communism. As for Roman Catholicism, in the last quarter-century its "Americanized" intelligentsia took satisfaction in becoming indistinguishable from the intellectual class of the culture, although the formal leadership of the bishops tended to be more cautious. Ties with the Vatican and with fellow-religionists in the captive nations, as they were called, underscored for thoughtful Catholics the conflict between Christianity and Communism. So in this time of reckoning the question of the American churches and the cold war is chiefly, although not exclusively, a question of those churches once called mainline.

Consideration of that question is helped by a timely new study by K. L. Billingsley, *From Mainline to Sideline: The Social Witness of the National Council of Churches* (Ethics and Public Policy Center). The book is the first comprehensive record of National Council of Churches (NCC) policy statements, resolutions, pronouncements, and publications on domestic and international issues from the founding of the organization in 1950 through 1987. The member churches of the NCC represent about one-fourth of the Christians in America, and the Council itself is dominated by the "brand name" denominations, such as Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, and United Church of Christ.

In its beginnings, the NCC, along with all the major voices of American liberalism, was unapologetically anti-Communist. In 1951 it affirmed "national defense and protection of the free world from aggression," while condemning the "communistic social system" that is "grounded on avowed atheism" and is "an unprecedented threat, especially since it claims to serve ethical purposes such as justice." A 1954 statement is equally unequivocal: "Our way of life has been challenged by totalitarian philosophies and practices, especially Communism. . . . From the Christian standpoint free democratic institutions are clearly superior to any form of totalitarianism."

By the latter half of the 1960s—again following the pattern of establishment liberalism and in accord with the views of its major member churches—the NCC was more equivocal about the relative merits of democracy and its alternatives. In 1968 the NCC declared that the dichotomy between "the free world" and "the Communist world" had "lost validity" and should be rejected. In the following years the contest of the cold war was routinely deplored by the NCC as a distraction from the real division of the world, which is between North and South, rich and poor, exploiter and exploited, the forces of oppression and the forces of liberation.

The East-West conflict was increasingly depicted in terms of what came to be called "moral equivalence." A 1969 resolution criticizing the Soviets' brutal repression of Czechoslovakia's 1968 bid for freedom noted "the continued, oppressive situation" in Czechoslovakia, but quickly added that "our country itself has been guilty of oppression." In the NCC's blizzard of pronouncements in the years following, Soviet oppression in eastern Europe was almost entirely neglected, although in late 1977 the churches were urged "to pray and act . . . for all prisoners of conscience in the USSR and other countries under Soviet domination." Typically, however, Communist behavior was viewed in a more benign light. In China's Cultural Revolution, according to official Chinese estimates, 100 million people were subjected to political persecution, and human rights experts estimate that 400,000 were killed. At the time, an official publication of the NCC compared the Cultural Revolution with the Protestant Reformation "in its drive to restore the vigor and purity of revolutionary goals and practices." The NCC issued no subsequent resolution or policy statement on that tragic period.

The language of moral equivalence between the democracies and totalitarianism was intended to fend off the temptation to self-righteousness, the temptation to think that "we" were the good guys and "they" were the bad guys. In the 1930s Reinhold Niebuhr encountered the same phenomenon in trying to get the churches to face up to the threat of Hitlerism. His critics claimed that he was distracting attention from the problems in American life, and that he was

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encouraging feelings of moral superiority in the democracies. Niebuhr, who had a keen appreciation of America's own problems, responded that democracy *is* morally superior to totalitarianism, which is not to say that we as individuals are morally superior to those who are forced to live under totalitarian rule. If we ourselves must be perfect before we challenge great evil, Niebuhr argued, great evil will go unchallenged.

"The historic situation in western nations," he wrote in 1936, did not offer the possibility of breaking through to the "new society" that he and others desired. "It offers only the immediate possibility of defending democratic institutions, however corrupted, against the peril of fascism." Over the last quarter-century of the cold war, the oldline churches of America abandoned a Niebuhrian understanding of historical possibilities and imperatives, of the need to choose among lesser evils and relative goods. The result of that abandonment is a shameful record of silence, ambivalence, duplicity, and, yes, complicity.

At times, the doctrine of moral equivalence was set aside in favor of giving a distinct moral edge to Communist regimes. The forces of capitalism and alleged militarism, led by the U.S., were regularly and "prophetically" blamed for the host of evils in the world. At the same time, curious views of the Soviet Union were promulgated. For instance, a 1984 publication praised the great economic successes of the Soviet Union and scolded westerners who held a different view. "The Soviet economic achievement is often denigrated—readily labeled a failure. The ideological and psychological advantage of this is of course obvious. We thereby prove our system right, theirs wrong! The result is more self-congratulation than illumination." The reality is, we were told, that the USSR is the "second most productive country in the world." And this, the reader may be forgiven for remembering, at a time when the catastrophic failure of the Soviet economic system, and the human costs exacted by that system, were evident to all but the willfully obtuse.

Economic and political propaganda is one thing, but human rights, especially religious rights, would seem to be closer to the heart of Christian concern. Yet, again in 1984, the NCC conducted a large "peace exchange" with the Soviets. At a Moscow worship service honoring 266 delegates from the U.S., two Russian women unfurled banners pleading in English, "Pray for the persecuted church." An NCC leader helped the authorities to keep the women, who wanted to tell their story, away from the American delegates. He explained that talking with the women would have been "impolite to the Soviet hosts." A second leader opined that such a situation would not have been handled much differently in the U.S. After reporting in depressing detail many similar statements and actions, Billingsley concludes: "In summary, the National Council of Churches has virtually ignored the massive evidence of widespread religious repression and other human rights violations in the East European countries."

Asserting that prophetic criticism should begin at home, the NCC was seldom reticent in doing what it saw to be its prophetic duty. Upon assuming the post of NCC general secretary, Dr. Arie Brouwer offered his view of what was troubling the world. "No longer secure in the ideals of freedom and justice, our nation has permitted itself to think that the world could be made free by force. It has propped up tyrants and helped to crush the aspirations and hopes of people struggling for peace and justice. Increasingly our nation has placed its trust in total power, and we therefore live in fear of total destruction, increasingly isolated from the world community." Brouwer was simply echoing a view that was pervasive in NCC programs and pronouncements since the mid-sixties: On balance, and considering the alternatives, the U.S. is a force for evil in the world. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was frequently depicted as reacting defensively to the political, economic, and military aggressiveness of the United States and its allies.

Not surprisingly, the NCC and its member churches were accused of employing a "double standard" in judging the behavior of nations. On human-rights violations the charge of duplicity hit home and was regularly, often vehemently, denied. Sometimes, however, a greater candor prevailed. In 1977, for example, a delegation of church officials visited Cuba. Under the dictatorship of Fidel Castro, Cuba probably had more political prisoners per capita than any country in the world. In their report the American religious leaders, including a Methodist bishop who would soon become president of the NCC, declared themselves "challenged and inspired" by the revolution in Cuba. They flatly denied that Cuban Christians were persecuted, and repeated the NCC call for an end to U.S. embargoes of Cuba. With respect to political prisoners, the church leaders offered this telling distinction: "There is a significant difference between situations where people are imprisoned for opposing regimes designed to perpetuate inequities (as in Chile and Brazil, for example) and situations where people are imprisoned for opposing regimes designed to remove inequities (as in Cuba)." In other words, a double standard was nothing to be ashamed of.

Perhaps the most searingly poignant indictment of that pattern of duplicity was offered by Armando Valladares, who described his more than twenty years as a political prisoner of Fidel Castro in *Against All Hope:*

> During those years, with the purpose of forcing us to abandon our religious beliefs and to demoralize us, the Cuban Communist indoctri-

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> nators repeatedly used the statements of support for Castro's revolution made by some representatives of American Christian churches. . . . That was worse for the Christian political prisoners than the beatings or the hunger. Incomprehensibly to us, while we waited for the embrace of solidarity from our brothers in Christ, those who were embraced were our tormentors.

It was incomprehensible to Armando Valladares and his fellow prisoners in Cuba, as it has over the years been incomprehensible to those who have been persecuted, tortured, imprisoned, and killed for the faith in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Vietnam, China, and wherever Marxist regimes imposed their brutal control. Toward the end of *Mainline to Sideline,* Billingsley observes: "The extensive research for this study turned up no evidence that the NCC had ever, in any council document, publicly acknowledged or apologized for factual error, poor judgment, or political bias." Abandoning their 1950s clarity about the difference between democracy and totalitarianism, between religious freedom and repression, the NCC and its chief member churches have for more than twenty years been on a reckless binge of no-fault prophecy.

No responsibility is accepted for having variously ignored, denied, belittled, and excused the most massive and systematic persecution of religious believers, Christian and non-Christian alike, in human history. No fault is acknowledged for having cloaked with the moral patina of "idealism" the demonic ideas that, in historical application, produced among other atrocities the Soviet gulag, the famine in the Ukraine, the Cultural Revolution, the killing fields of Cambodia, the reeducation camps of Vietnam, the slaughter of Tiananmen Square, and the mass graves still being unearthed from Rumania to Kiev. While such crimes against humanity were occasionally deplored in the statements of the oldline churches, the conventional message was that we must respect the right of other people "to choose their own form of government," that we should welcome efforts to build "socialist alternatives" to the inadequacies of capitalism, and that, in any case, we Americans lacked moral standing to criticize "people struggling for peace and justice."

For such religious leaders, the great imperative was to strike the prophetic posture, to cut through the ambiguities and contradictions in order to demonstrate that they were, as it was said, "on the right side of history." Now that history is turning out in a way very different from what they expected, it is perhaps not so important that they be reproached by fellow-Christians in this country. From beneath the rubble of crumbling tyrannies the survivors are finding their voice. Those in the West who served so long as apologists for their oppression will no doubt have accusers enough. Were one looking for the authentically prophetic word pertinent to the sad story of the NCC and the religious left in America, it would be perhaps the word of I Peter 4: "For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God."

# Peace Dividends & the Progressive Paradigm

The end of the Cold War (how matter of fact those words already appear) requires reconsiderations in every aspect of American political life. Dean Acheson wrote of his postwar generation that its members were "present at the creation" of a new world. So also, it seems, are we, and the occasion of a new world teaches new political duties. That such is the case in foreign affairs is self-evident, but it is the case as well, if less obviously so, in domestic affairs.

We have heard already considerable discussion of a 1990s "peace dividend," a diversion of spending from military needs to social concerns made possible by the radical diminution of the Soviet threat. There is wide disagreement as to the likely size of the dividend (some question whether it will materialize at all) and even more as to the uses to which it should be put. Conservatives speak of applying it to the budget deficit or of seizing the opportunity to cut taxes and reinvigorate the private sector. But the more commonly heard suggestion is that proceeds from the dividend should go to any of a wide variety of social programs: AIDS research, day care, education, drug control, medical care, public housing, environmental protection, repair of the nation's infrastructure. Proponents of increased public spending refer repeatedly to our "starved public sector," and they look to the potential peace dividend as an opportunity to return to liberal social programs fallen on lean days because of budget restrictions and the conservative social philosophy of the Reagan and Bush administrations.

That there is a case to be made for selective increases in federal spending we do not doubt, but the general proposition lurking behind those specific instances needs careful evaluation. Since the emergence of Populism in the 1890s, thinking about American public policy has been dominated by what might be called the progressive paradigm. In recent years that paradigm and the scheme of political morality that follows from it have come under critical scrutiny, and it would be unfortunate if in our eagerness to fund particular programs we would disregard

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the lessons suggested by that scrutiny.

The progressive paradigm is disarmingly simple. It suggests that the growth of a complex economy required the comparable development of a complex national governing authority. The emergence of industrial civilization, in other words, called forth a federal apparatus sufficient to the need to regulate the private sector in the public interest, to provide macroeconomic stability amidst the uncertainties of the business cycle, and to offer the nation's citizens welfare and security programs appropriate to the vicissitudes of modern life.

Only libertarians of an absolutist persuasion would reject the progressive paradigm altogether. It cannot be denied that big government did in some sense follow necessarily from the growth of large institutions in the private sector. Big government is to that extent an unavoidable part of the bargain of modernity.

But the cost of that bargain requires continuous monitoring. It is all too easy to accept unthinkingly the assumption that if some increase in government is good, even necessary, then more of that necessary good thing must be even better. From that innocent assumption has flowed a series of social disasters, ranging all the way from inefficiency and petty meddlesomeness to fullscale tyranny. Thomas Jefferson believed that that government is best which governs least. That observation no longer holds—perhaps it never did—but its polar opposite has wrought evils far more disastrous in their consequences.

Recent economic and social developments have led thoughtful people to question the progressive paradigm as never before. Socialism has conclusively failed and the comprehensive regulatory/welfare state has come under severe challenge. Experts on political economy differ notoriously, but no one any longer takes it as given that an artfully contrived government can create or maintain the good life for its citizens or that we most effectively respond to social problems by, as the saying goes, throwing money at them. Government can, in some cases, make things better. It can also make them considerably worse.

Even many liberals for whom faith in activist government had earlier been the central doctrine of their political creed have recently felt twinges of agnostic uncertainty. Most liberals today call for selective increases in federal spending, but few if any urge a return to the practices of the Great Society. We know from rueful experience that federal regulation can be at once ineffective and economically damaging, that the government's ability to "fine-tune" the economy has been highly exaggerated, and that the tendency of welfare spending to create conditions of dependency is more than a hobgoblin of timid or reactionary minds.

Yet even as the politics of the progressive paradigm comes under skeptical reconsideration, the model of public morality that goes with it remains largely unexamined. Political rhetoric continues to assume that social morality simply *means* government activism on behalf of those deemed to be the least advantaged members of society. That assumption made sense when we could assume in turn that activist government could deliver what it intended. We know better by now—the law of unintended consequences having become a commonplace of social analysis—yet conversation in the moral realm proceeds as if nothing had changed.

We hear the language of "compassion" and "caring" and our minds turn by conditioned reflex to consideration of new laws to be passed, new bureaucracies to be put in place, new monies to be spent. The superstition persists that to be a decent person in politics is to be, at the very least, a social democrat. That explains why the Reagan administration was so widely condemned, at least in the elite culture, as morally inadequate, even "mean-spirited." Those condemnations followed as night the day from the equation of social decency with activist government: an administration skeptical of activist government placed itself *by definition* in the moral wrong.

The tendency of our moral elites to follow the patterns of the progressive paradigm stems from their membership in the new class, for it is that class that by sociological and political inclination clings most stubbornly to the progressive faith. It has been for not a few of them a form of political religion. But ingrained commitments and prejudices do not explain everything about the persistence of the old paradigm. There is also the point of which John Cardinal Newman famously reminded us: only the force of a superior argument can dislodge an antiquated idea from our minds. A major attraction of the old paradigm was that by providing a schematic framework within which the details of modern American development could be placed it helped make sense of the national experience. It provided, we might say, the story line for explaining America. That story line is by now more than a little frayed at the intellectual edges, but the absence of an alternative delays its final demise.

A plausible case can be made that much of the current disarray and uncertainty in our politics—including the politics of the anticipated peace dividend—stems from the crisis of the progressive paradigm. It has lost its vitality, but it will not die. We know it doesn't work any more but we can't quite let go of it because even a bad theory seems better than no theory at all. But if we cannot yet replace it, we can at least be disenthralled of it. A useful step in that direction would be to conduct our political dialogue concerning the peace dividend in conscious disregard of the paradigm's preconceptions. That may not take us all that far, but it is a place to start. There is, we should be able to agree, no *prima facie* case either for or against activist government. Everything in politics comes down to prudence and experience. In such modest knowledge may lie the beginning of wisdom.

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# Opinion

## Eastern Europe: History Resumed

*Thomas Molnar*

Eastern Europe in 1990 is not to be confused with Africa in 1960. African decolonization was a relatively peaceful affair. It was sponsored and financed by the former colonial powers, and the new regimes, with one or two exceptions, accepted either some semblance of democracy or a benevolent one-man rule. Later on, most of the new nations changed their minds and reverted to traditional tribal ways, though even then they still paid lip-service to western models. In contrast, Eastern Europe, while it knows what democracy is about, has hardly ever practiced it, at least its American variety. Czechoslovakia is an exception, although that nation's record with respect to its German and Hungarian minorities has not been a distinguished one.

A new chapter is now opening in Eastern Europe, but we should not be overly surprised if, as in Africa, the old ways soon reassert themselves. The things that people and governments say in the flush of sudden change may not correspond closely to the structures they elaborate with the passage of time. In the gray morning after the previous night's celebration old mental habits easily reappear, especially if vague but heady promises of better days are not soon realized.

The prospects for the region are thus rather different from those suggested in Francis Fukuyama's vision of an imagined western triumph over history. In a way, history may just be beginning in an Eastern Europe that has been excluded from it since the 1500s, when the Ottomans occupied a huge chunk of it. The Turks were followed by the Hapsburgs here, by the Muscovites there, and Eastern Europe was condemned to a political, cultural, and even linguisitc somnolence for four centuries. And we know what happened when the hibernation seemed finally to be over: first Versailles, then Yalta.

The situation is, thus, quite unsettled, and the United States, a relative newcomer in the area, ought to be especially careful about stepping into a hornet's nest (which is not to be confused with a vacuum). The nations of Eastern Europe may be novices in democracy, but they know something about history and geopolitics. George Bush would do well to avoid prescribing for Eastern Europe in the manner adopted by Zbgniew Brzezinski toward the Soviet Union. Brzezinski has written (in the *Washington Post* last November 12) that we expect the new Russia to be democratic, adopt the free-market system, and dissolve itself in a confederacy. Such hubristic drawing up of blueprints for others can only wind up in mutual frustration and disappointment.

After all, Russia *is* a great power, and a jealous one at that, whether tsarist, Stalinist, or pan-Slavist or whether the president is Gorbachev or, tomorrow perhaps, Solzhenitsyn. We are naive to be scandalized that Moscow still increases some branches of its weaponry, sends out spies, and practices disinformation. Tomorrow we will no doubt be similarly scandalized that Communist parties in Eastern Europe remain in the hastily set up parliaments and that they gather some old and many new votes as the economy does not improve overnight and the fragile social structures show signs of stress. For decades, the Communist vote in France and Italy was largely a protest vote; this could well become the case in Eastern Europe, where Marxist parties will no longer bear the burden of being associated with Soviet tanks.

Washington thus ought to remember that it cannot govern the planet, and that it is counter-productive to try to impose the same model of political economy on islands in the Pacific and on the Russian steppes. The sending of emergency aid accompanied by hectoring admonitions is not the equivalent of a sustained foreign policy. Those who see democracy breaking out all over Eastern Europe should look more closely at what might hide under the democratic label. There are strong possibilities, as in post-1960 Africa, that the new regimes will indeed opt for "democracy," not because they actually believe in it or mean to practice it but because it has become a universal, thus increasingly meaningless, term with a greatly varied bag of contents. The form it takes in Latvia will be quite different from that in Bulgaria.

Geopolitics commands the elements of political choice. Placed between a reunited Germany and a convalescent, hence temporarily weak, Russia, Eastern Europe can look forward to years of adjustment in the region's power equilibrium. In reality, the current situation favors Germany, the big winner in the present upheaval. A united Germany is likely to instill a new vigor to national feelings. Germany's Prussian half, although numerically in the minority, may become a pole of attraction for the rest of the country. Was East Germany not hardened by Marxism and by suffering, is it not exposed to the East, is it not more historically conscious than the West German consumer society? Will the reunited nation (its capital, Berlin) not repudiate the French connection? Will relations not cool with Washington?

These reflections serve as reminders that Washington cannot take for granted either Fukuyama's Hegelian rhapsody or its own blueprint of post-Soviet democracy in Eastern Europe. Nationalistic feelings aroused by recent developments already show signs

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of reigniting old controversies. Germans in Poland greeted Helmut Kohl as "our chancellor"; Hungarians claim parts of Transylvania; Rumania wants Bessarabia back; Yugoslavia may dissolve at any time; Bulgarians, remembering Ottoman suppression, attack their Turkish minority. For years Russian dominance froze inter-satellite hostilities. We may see them soon erupt.

Given all this, one must remain skeptical about Washington's hope of Eastern Europe choosing democracy and joining the western orbit. Nationalism, now intensified by its long forcible denial, is not a promoter of the democratic system, whether in Argentina or Rumania. Fukuyama and other enthusiasts of democracy have broken out the champagne bottles a little too early. Democracy seems to require for its success a bourgeois social consciousness based, as in the United States, in sustained prosperity, political moderation, and a liberal tradition. These factors do not exist in Eastern Europe, where the Communist regimes have left behind massive social dislocation, a tenacious *nomenklatura,* and a proletarianized mass of ideologically rootless and politically skeptical individuals. The dominant political creed is: everyone for himself. True, this leaderless population was able to storm the new Bastilles, the Berlin Wall and Ceausescu's luxury palace. But they did so not so much in the expectation of democracy as of a modicum of well-being and freedom of movement that almost any successor regime can satisfy.

Washington would be well advised not to put all its political hopes in one basket, thereby contributing to the blockage of Eastern European evolution. The tremendous significance of 1989 was precisely to open up a whole bundle of historical possibilities the outcome of which it would be folly prematurely to attempt to prescribe.

Thomas Molnar *is a professor of Philosophy at the City University of New York. He is the author of* Twin Powers: Politics and the Sacred.

# *Time*think on the Rocks

*Steven Hayward*

Poor *Time.*

Twenty-four years ago this month, the magazine brought us its Nietzschean fears with its famous red-on-black cover, "Is God Dead?" More recently, apparently, the agnostic editors of *Time* experienced a crisis of faith over the secular substitute for God, and thus presented the interrogative cover of October 23, 1989: "Is Government Dead?"

The irony, which is surely lost on *Time*'s editors, is that God and Government are in a doubtful state for remarkably similar reasons. These two cover stories could, without much work, be combined into one treatment. Furthermore, *Time* is likely to remain oblivious to its role in the executioner's chorus for both God and Government.

*Time*'s essay on Government (which it capitalizes thoughout the text) reads more like an extended *New York Times* editorial than a genuine newsweekly feature piece. It is littered with errors and dubious, if not wrongheaded, judgments. *Time* thinks the conservative complaints about Government are "self-evidently silly." "Of course," *Time* reflexively jerks, "Government must do something. That is why it exists. . . ."

Even though its editors made a botch job of it, *Time* is essentially correct that Government is dead. In the ordinary sense we have more "Government" than ever, i.e., massively expensive regulatory bureaucracies micromanaging ever more details of people's lives and livelihoods. But of course this is not *Government* properly understood, it is Administration. The result of the regulatory revolution of the last thirty years has been to transform our democratic Government into a highly centralized Administrative State. This indeed has been the goal of "scientific" politics all along, from thinkers as ostensibly diverse as Marx and Woodrow Wilson. One should recall the famous dictum, attributed to several radical thinkers, that the goal of scientific politics is to "replace the government of men with the administration of things."

Although *Time* is oblivious to this fundamental trend in politics, its earlier essay did understand that the scientific revolution was pre-eminent among the causes of God's demise. Science has so thoroughly swept the field of competition that, as Irving Kristol wrote a few years ago, "theology has practically ceased to be a respectable form of intellectual activity." "God," *Time* observed in its cover essay in 1966, "was seen as the apex of a great pyramid of being that extended downward to the tiniest stone, the ultimate ruler of an ordered cosmos. . . ." But if science can explain the motions of the tiniest stone according to demonstrable physical laws, then God as the final, contingent Being is unnecessary.

There's only one problem with this view: it doesn't work. The leading edge of astronomy and theoretical particle physics has called into question the fundamental scientific premise that Everything Can Be Explained, and more than a few scientists have murmured the word "God" out of the corners of their mouths.

The impact of the scientific revolution on democratic politics is less widely comprehended. The best

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American treatise of the scientific theory of the administrative state comes from Woodrow Wilson, who thought modern science required a new theory of government. The constitutional separation of powers and the "checks-and-balances" system was, Wilson thought, based on an outmoded Newtonian understanding of the universe. Darwin had replaced Newton, Wilson wrote. Thus, "Living political constitutions must be Darwinian in structure and practice."

What this means is that expert administrators are to be empowered to guide and shape man's Progress. Moreover, these administrators are to be largely independent of the normal political process and effectively sealed off from public opinion. Inherent in this theory is the view that there are no fundamental political controversies that can't be adjudicated through scientific administration. "Process" replaces politics. Most importantly, individual natural rights is an obsolete doctrine as well. Thus, democratic "Government," as the arena in which representatives deliberate over the moral dimensions of great controversies, is strictly speaking unnecessary, just as God is unnecessary.

There's only one problem with this view: it doesn't work. The breakdown of the separation of powers has generated a low-intensity constitutional crisis in which the President is effectively deprived of command over the executive branch and the federal budget. Congress has transformed itself into an administrative body, with its members offering intercessions, like medieval priests, on behalf of special interests. In return for these intercessions, the high priests of Capitol Hill are rewarded with the indulgences of PAC money. Meanwhile, as every free-market critic of bureaucratic management has predicted, centralized administration of American life is excessively burdensome and destructive of character.

*Time* rightly perceives that things are in a mess. It is much less clear on the causes of this mess. In the God essay twenty-four years ago, *Time* noted that the image of God as a "wonder worker" was a discredited, if not paltry, view of the Deity. Today Government, which at the time of the death of God was celebrated by *Time* as the omnipotent progenitor of the Great Society, is no better than a "dispenser of largesse." Government as ersatz wonder worker is dead, too.

It must be awfully despairing to be a *Time* editor these days. God is dead, Government is dead, and on top of it all we may be at the End of History. God, who can take care of Himself, has already made a comeback. But democratic Government, a human contrivance, is less secure. *Time* in 1966 said that the postwar religious revival was over, just a few years before the explosion of attendance at evangelical churches. Today, *Time* thinks Ronald Reagan's philosophy of government was a "costly irrelevancy," and that George Bush is hopeless as a leader. The people of America have proven remarkably resistant to the crisis of faith that infects *Time*. They keep electing conservative Presidents by large margins. They keep going to church. The really incredible thing is that anyone keeps reading *Time*.

Steven Hayward *is Director of the Claremont Institute's Golden State Project, which studies public policy issues in California.*

# Parable from the Prairie

*John E. Coons*

In 1984 a federal court held the public schools of the Kansas City, Missouri, School District to be in systematic violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. Both the district (KCD) and the State of Missouri had consciously worked to maintain racial segregation in the district's schools. The pupil population of KCD is roughly 35,000; at the time of the decision, 30 percent of the pupils were white and nearly all the remainder black.

KCD lies roughly in the middle of the city of Kansas City; it is geographically compact and is ringed on the east, north, and south by school districts that are mostly white. Some of these districts lie within, and some overlap or lie just outside, the town of Kansas City. All of these other districts were also defendants in the case but only the schools of KCD were found to be deliberately segregated. The western boundary of the district is the Kansas State line; nearly everyone on the Kansas side is white.

In his written opinion, Judge Russell Clark conceded the futility of trying to spread the few remaining whites proportionately among KCD schools; enough had already emigrated to the other districts and to private schools. Instead he ordered massive infusions of money—mostly from the state—to create integrated "magnet" schools that would attract whites back to KCD. Judge Clark set a 60/40 black-white ratio for the magnets; blacks could enroll only as whites enrolled in these proportions.

At the same time, Judge Clark ordered the district and the state to pay for the voluntary transfer of black KCD students to the neighboring Missouri districts. By reducing black concentration in KCD, such self-chosen emigration might help reverse the tide of white flight while providing racial integration for those children who transferred. The districts that received these transfers would have all their costs covered,

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mostly by the state. Transportation was also to be added at state expense. All these aspects of Judge Clark's order were upheld on appeal.

Unhappily, the plan has backfired. In 1990 there are fewer white children than ever in KCD. The magnets have attracted mainly black applicants, and these have been turned away whenever their presence would offend the 60/40 formula—which is very often the case. For the most part these children are forced to return to their virtually all-black schools. Frustrated parents have brought a separate action alleging that such exclusion from magnet schools violates a Fourteenth Amendment right to neutral treatment.

Here and there successful desegregation has occurred. By busing a limited number of black children to the remaining white neighborhoods, some schools within KCD are balanced at the required ratio. But, with an overall district white population of 25 percent, these schools are very few. KCD cannot solve the problem itself, and most of its black children remain stuck in heavily segregated schools.

What happened to the voluntary transfers of black children to the neighboring white districts? Thousands of black families signed up to transfer their children; unfortunately these other public schools will not have them either. Those districts were found not guilty in the original suit, and Judge Clark cannot order them to do anything. Currently the original plaintiffs are asking him instead to bribe these reluctant districts with a $1,000 bonus per transfer.

This sad tale is not unique among American urban schools. Metropolitan Detroit represents the same problem of a guilty state, a guilty Detroit district that is heavily minority—and no place else for the inner-city children to go. And, apart from the judicial orders that are peculiar to Detroit and Kansas City, much the same condition holds for many another urban area. The District of Columbia is the most familiar example.

Beginning in the late 1970s a partial solution to this problem was proposed to the civil rights legal fraternity. The federal court could break the impasse by using the one desegregated institution that was open to black children—private schools. Thousands of such schools operate in the cities within reasonable travel distance of segregated public schools. Most are relatively small religious institutions. In and about Kansas City the greater number are operated by Catholic and Lutheran parishes. Some are mostly black, some mostly white, and some racially balanced. Many of their pupils, especially the black children, attend Baptist or other churches—or none—but are content to take the religious curriculum of the school.

Two other important features shared by the Kansas City private schools should also be noted. First, they typify the environment now recognized as the most effective in educating disadvantaged children; as James Coleman and others have shown, the way to teach those who are worst off is within communities of shared belief. Second, these private schools spend roughly $2,000 per pupil per year; the public schools spend roughly $6,000. This also is typical of the national pattern.

In January, 1988, the Lawyers' Committee for Equal Rights in Education (CERIE) began to look for local lawyers in Kansas City to represent black children as plaintiffs. Their legal theory was utterly simple. The children would demand that their right to a desegregated education be vindicated by ordering the defendants to provide scholarships that could pay for tuition in integrated private schools chosen by parents. The idea has passed inspection by a battery of lawyers who are national authorities on issues of desegregation and church-state relations. All agreed that the enterprise was sound from a constitutional point of view.

Finding the right theory, however, was less trouble than finding the right lawyer. The recruiting process was itself a revelation of the conflicting attitudes among those who claim devotion to civil rights. The search took a full year during which lawyers from the ACLU as well as the original plaintiffs in the desegregation case declined to help the children. In each instance those who were approached agreed that such a judicial order would be good for the transferring students and good for the integration of the system. Their problem was the involvement of private religious schools. Just why this was an impediment for them was not specified. Given the current interpretation of church-state doctrine, the objection appears more personal than legal. To accept church schools as a refuge of civil rights would seem to represent too costly a shift in the self-image of these men and women.

The lawyers who finally took the case are a pair of high-energy business litigators, Richard and Stephen Miller—father and son. The Millers have long been leaders in practical reform projects in the Kansas City ghetto. Richard has systematically provided college tuition for a number of black high-school graduates. This is the Millers' first "civil rights" case. Their childlike enthusiasm for the task is a vivid contrast to the irritation of the defendants and of the Washington firms they have hired to assure that nobody departs the establishment.

The complaint was filed in federal court on July 13, 1989, on behalf of named black children and all others who, like them, wished to vindicate their Fourteenth Amendment right in the private sector. It listed nearly fifty Catholic, Lutheran, and secular schools that have specifically offered to take the plaintiff children without imposing academic barriers. These schools are scattered throughout KCD, the city, the suburbs, and nearby Kansas. They have offered 4,100 racially integrated places at an average cost of about $2,200. The case is styled *Rivarde v. Kansas City Missouri School District.* Little Quintin Rivarde is

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now nine years old; litigation is always unpredictable, but Quintin stands a fair chance of being famous before he gets to high school.

In the plainest way, the *Rivarde* case restates an old question: Just what are the justifications for government monopoly over the education of the poor? Those who cling to the old ways at such fearful cost to the children and in defiance of their parents' hopes would do well to offer society some neutral explanation. It is painful to suppose that Kansas City is another metaphor for the cold war over religion in the public square.

John E. Coons *is a professor in Boalt Hall, the School of Law at the University of California at Berkeley.*

# Fuzzing Family Values: The Mass Mutual Survey

*Gary L. Bauer*

By now it should be axiomatic that surveys and polls tell us as much about the people who conduct them as they do about those they query. What's involved is the census-taking equivalent of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, the notion that pollsters affect the content of the responses they receive merely by deciding what it is they want to measure.

These thoughts came to mind again with release late last year of a new survey on family values by the MassMutual Life Insurance Co. Much of the survey was unexceptionable and the analysis sound. Large majorities of the 1,200 people interviewed identify family life as their foremost source of satisfaction, with friendships lagging a distant second. A majority also seem to believe that as family goes, so goes the nation. "Lack of parental discipline" and "declining family values" were cited most often as the cause of modern social problems.

In fact, the role of the family loomed so important with most of the respondents that, as Dr. Albert Solnit of Yale's Child Study Center put it, people cherish their families and family history "even when their experience has been less than perfect." Happy and unhappy families are alike at least to that degree, Tolstoy's famous aphorism notwithstanding.

Apart from these reinforcing findings, however, MassMutual's analysts were able to discern—perhaps through ruse-colored glasses—a distinct strain of political implications in the survey results. As an Associated Press story noted, the survey uncovered the "fact" that Americans by a 3-1 margin prefer to define family in terms of "love and care" rather than the traditional legal concept of a "group related by blood, marriage, or adoption." The survey went on to conclude that most Americans "are not interested in the Moral Majority agenda. In this poll, the majority believe in family values without accepting the prescriptions of some moralists."

If that pejorative phraseology does not give away the inclinations of the survey authors, a closer look at the data surely does. The heart of their argument, carried without caveat in most press coverage, is that on a list of 28 items broadly described as "family values," respondents ranked support for school prayer 25th and opposition to abortion 27th. One might gather from this that "opposition to school prayer" and "support for abortion" were somewhere on the list and presumably ranked higher. Not so. One might also suppose that the list included a comprehensive set of public-policy propositions clearly expressed as such and ranked accordingly. Not so—school prayer and abortion were the only policy issues examined.

Instead, the list of family values, apart from these two issues, was a set of very general propositions, ranging from "respecting one's parents" (2nd) to "having a happy marriage" (6th) to "having nice things" (26th). A few of the general propositions, unmentioned in press accounts, cut against the conclusion that a moral agenda is irrelevant to most Americans: "having faith in God," "being married to the same person for life," and "following a strict moral code" ranked 10th, 12th, and 13th, respectively.

Pro-family people realize that they have their work cut out for them in the present media-political climate, but, if anything, the MassMutual survey offers some encouragement. Nearly all of the family values studied in the survey received positive grades from the respondents—"opposition to abortion" was 27th on a very warmly received list (in fact, it fell just three places behind "helping your community or neighborhood"). Fifty-three percent of the respondents felt that opposition to abortion reflected a family value either "pretty well" or "very well." Only 19 percent replied "not at all well." For school prayer the corresponding numbers were 63 percent and 13 percent.

What about the matter of the definition of the family? Although the survey analysis did not explore this issue in its most politically charged terms, vis-a-vis proposals for "domestic partnerships" and homosexual marriage, the authors are at pains to show that family "is not defined in terms of households or bloodlines." Family values, they state, have really to do only with "the nature and quality of relations with others."

Given the choice to define family in terms of loving and caring relationships, membership in a household,

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or relations of blood, marriage, and adoption, the vast majority of people selected the first term. For that, let us rejoice. Religious people are the last to deny that the meaning of "family" has its most profound roots in the ideal of self-sacrificial love. Christians in particular take their cue from a teacher who gave a rather broad definition of both family (Luke 8:19-21; Matthew 12:46-50) and neighbor (Luke 10:29-37).

No one should find fault (or draw conclusions) if Americans, for once, fail to think and respond legalistically. MassMutual did not ask its respondents to choose between the traditional and pop culture definitions of family, nor did it exemplify the differences and ask respondents to classify their views accordingly. Most Americans would likely select "places like groceries and gas stations" as the definition of "business" rather than cite the Uniform Commercial Code or Black's Law Dictionary. But the social and legal significance of their doing so would be minimal. Had MassMutual desired to determine whether most Americans wish to jettison the traditional family unit as a foundation stone of law and public policy, that could have been probed directly.

A generally unreported question in the survey actually did ask the respondents *who* they mean by close family. They answered by citing most often 12 relationships established by "blood, marriage, or adoption"; a reader must wade that far before coming to one founded on another basis: "friends," chosen as "close family" by only one of every 10 respondents. In fact, the respondents were relatively restrictive in defining close family even where legal criteria are fully met: only half of the respondents who actually had stepchildren defined those children as close family.

Among the most interesting insights the survey did afford were an affirmation of the importance of family time and a suggestion that many people have a bleaker view of family life in general than of their own lives as members of families. Fifty-six percent of those surveyed felt that the quality of American family life is getting worse; 62 percent believe that family values have weakened; even higher percentages are pessimistic about the state of the family 10 years from now. Despite this, over 70 percent find their own family life to be "very satisfying" or better.

Bias in the polling sample or an unwillingness to confess family problems to strangers are possible explanations for these results. There are others as well. Articles about successful families and happy anniversaries are staples of the nation's community press, club newsletters, and church bulletins. But as has often been observed, they do not make for dramatic cover stories or lead reports on the evening news. G. K. Chesterton once summarized his contempt for journalists by remarking, "They cannot announce the happiness of mankind at all. Thy cannot describe all the forks that are not stolen, or all the marriages that are not judiciously dissolved. Hence the complete picture they give of life is of necessity fallacious: they can only represent what is unusual."

Many people who are now hearing of the family's demise didn't know that the poor fellow was sick. This raises a delicate issue for pro-family advocates, who have taken on as a solemn responsibility trends in abortion, divorce, child abuse, and drug use. We argue, with a wealth of supporting evidence, that the family is in deep trouble. But it is no accident that those who would bury the family altogether take peculiar pleasure in this form of doomsaying; they are anxious to pronounce the body cold and to list the cause of death as suicide.

It may be closer to the truth to say that unfavorable trends are real and of considerable magnitude, but nonetheless that a fraction of the population accounts for a disproportionate amount of the depressing statistics. For example, nearly half of the women who enter America's abortion clinics today (usually alone) have been there before—almost 15 percent of them at least twice before. The typical child molester, according to the Attorney General's Task Force on Pornography, molests an average of 366 children in his lifetime. Criminologists like Travis Hirschi have demonstrated that specialization among criminals is rare: the car thief, burglar, drug dealer, and assailant are not four people but one and the same.

What can we do, and soon, to restore the reality and the perception of health in American family life? Families themselves, especially those who make less than $30,000 per year, told MassMutual that "spending more time with family" was the most important means of strengthening family values. Having a "full-time parent raising kids" was the fourth most-often cited option. Providing day care and having a full-time relative care for kids were each chosen by less than 20 percent of the respondents.

These findings dovetail with other recent major surveys of family preferences. Advocates of federally subsidized day care from infancy tend to shrug off this kind of data and argue that the next decade will inevitably lead to nearly three-quarters of families having two full-time wage earners. If Congress and state legislatures listen to what families say they want, however, they will look for ways to ease policies like the "parenting penalty" that permeate the federal and state tax codes and are helping drive more and more young mothers with children into the job market.

Today a professional couple using paid child care and making $150,000 a year has access to tax credits and write-offs that can be worth as much as $1,800 in annual tax savings. Parents who make one-fifth of that amount but care for their own children get no relief at all. Pointing out that anomaly might have put some additional meat on MassMutual's bones, but that wouldn't have done much to gore the "Moral Majority" ox.

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School prayer and abortion—the items highlighted in the survey—are comfortably within the realm of family values, but they are something else, too: questions closely allied to the First and Fourteenth Amendments, to civil rights as much as to family values, and, above all, to the nature of the relationship between the individual and the Creator who, as our Declaration states, endows each one of us with every right that matters.

Gary L. Bauer, *domestic policy advisor in the Reagan administration, is President of the Family Research Council in Washington, D.C.*

# The Bishops and the Middle East

*Michael Wyschogrod*

The U.S. Catholic Bishops' Statement on the Middle East, adopted unanimously during the bishops' fall 1989 bicentennial meeting in Baltimore, is a surprisingly straightforward document. When the U.S. government deals with the Arab-Israeli conflict, its language is often more ambiguous. President Bush and Secretary Baker are trying to bring the parties to the conflict together, and this aim is frequently not served very well by too much clarity. Formulations that are less than crystal clear enable enemies to accept language that each can interpret to suit its own needs, thus creating the appearance of agreement—albeit partial agreement—when full agreement is not yet attainable.

But the U.S. bishops do not need to obtain the consent of the parties. They only need satisfy themselves that their position is a just one, suitable for teachers of the Christian faith who have come to realize in recent years that the faith has something to say to the problems of the day. So twice a year when the bishops meet, the faithful have come to expect from them guidance on perplexing issues, some of which have defied solution for decades.

The bishops' solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict boils down to two propositions. The first consists of the claim, affirmed in a December 23, 1988 Vatican press statement and quoted in the bishops' statement, that "the supreme pontiff . . . is deeply convinced that the two peoples have an identical, fundamental right to have their own homeland in which they live in freedom, dignity, and security in harmony with their neighbors." With this as their point of departure, the bishops further suggest a process of negotiations to achieve three objectives: "First, it should formalize Israel's existence as a sovereign state in the eyes of the Arab states and the Palestinians; second, it should establish *an independent Palestinian homeland with its sovereign status recognized by Israel;* third, there must be negotiated limits to the exercise of Palestinian sovereignty so that it is clear that Israel's security is protected" (my emphasis).

The bishops' statement thus constitutes a significant modification of the Vatican's position. While the Vatican speaks of a "homeland in which [the Palestinians] live in freedom, dignity, and security," the bishops' statement speaks of "an independent Palestinian homeland with its sovereign status recognized by Israel." The "homeland" referred to in the Vatican pronouncement could conceivably be a Palestinian autonomous region under Israeli sovereignty. But this interpretation is ruled out by "an independent Palestinian homeland with its sovereign status recognized by Israel."

True, there is a certain amount of fudging. Were the bishops to have spoken of "an independent Palestinian *state* with its sovereign status recognized by Israel," then the last vestige of ambiguity would have been removed. By avoiding the word "state," a minimum ambiguity is left in place, though only marginally. A homeland whose sovereignty is recognized is a sovereign state. Being sovereign is the essence of being a state, so any entity whose sovereignty is recognized is a state. One can only speculate that some bishops wanted to recommend a sovereign Palestinian state while others had reservations about such a course. The compromise struck gave the sovereign-state faction a 98 percent victory, even if a trace of the anti-sovereignty view remained. Should anyone doubt the bishops' commitment to the sovereignty solution, he need only consult another passage in the document that advocates "Palestinian representation in Middle East negotiations leading to Palestinian territorial and political sovereignty." While here again the word "state" is avoided, the meaning is clear.

What is newsworthy in the bishops' statement is thus the recommendation of a sovereign Palestinian state. The bishops were aware, of course, of the body of opinion that believes that a sovereign Palestinian state consisting of the West Bank and Gaza is not compatible with Israeli security. Such a state would be ruled by the P.L.O., whose charter, never revoked, specifically calls for the abolition of Israel and the substitution of a secular, non-Jewish state. And even if the P.L.O. were to revise its charter, many would see this as a tactical maneuver designed to enable a sovereign Palestinian state to emerge which would then devote itself to the "liberation" of the rest of its lost territory.

Because the bishops do not wish to produce this result, they advocate "negotiated limits to the exercise of Palestinian sovereignty." Here again the

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language is most telling. Sovereignty is like pregnancy, one either is or one is not. In the early stages, pregnancy may not be very noticeable but it would be a grave error—as I am sure the bishops would agree—to interpret it as anything less than full pregnancy. The same is true of sovereignty. A sovereign state remains a sovereign state, even if it negotiates limits to the exercise of its sovereignty.

Notice the language the bishops use. The Palestinian state will not place limits on its sovereignty but on the *exercise* of its sovereignty. But a sovereign state that places limits on the exercise of its sovereignty can also cancel those limitations. To be sovereign means to be autonomous, to live by a law that is self-imposed. But what is self-imposed can also be self-annulled. What would the Catholic bishops say if the sovereign Palestinian state invited half a million Iranian volunteers to bolster its "defenses"? They would probably deplore it and, in due time, issue another policy statement.

While support for a sovereign Palestinian state is the most important of the statement's recommendations, it is its missing dimension that is most significant. There is very little theology in the paper. It contains reference to the sacred character of the area as the homeland of the three monotheistic religions and, more important, its guiding motif is the search for justice, a category not without theological roots. Nevertheless, the paper is essentially guided by the language of the 1985 Vatican statement in which "Christians are asked to understand the religious ties [of Jews to the land of Israel] that have deep biblical roots. But [Christians] are not to make their own any particular religious interpretation of this relationship." It adds: "With respect to the existence and the political choices of the State of Israel, they must be seen from a point of view that is not in itself religious but based on general considerations of international law."

Here is the crux of the problem. Evangelical and fundamentalist Christians find too little difficulty validating the Jewish right to the land of Israel on the basis of biblical promises. But the Vatican and the recent bishops' statement err in the other direction. Clearly, the biblical promises do not validate every political choice of the Israeli government. But for believing Jews and Christians, the Arab-Israeli conflict is not just another international problem to be approached only "based on general considerations of international law." It is not enough for the Catholic Church to take note of Jewish ties to the land "that have deep biblical roots." If they have deep biblical roots, then the Church must also take these ties seriously, not only as something that Jews have but as something the Church must struggle with. That decision was made when the Church decided to make the Hebrew Bible its own. And this is so even if the Church chooses to persist in spiritualizing the promises of the land, an ancient strategy not easy to defend in the new theological climate of Jewish-Christian dialogue.

To repeat: all this does not dictate one particular stance, for Jews or for Christians. But it does exclude the kind of non-theological treatment of the Arab-Israeli conflict to be found in the bishops' statement. It is curious that a Church that has the courage to deal theologically with many public issues loses its theological nerve when it comes to the Jewish return to the land of promise.

Michael Wyschogrod *is Professor of Philosophy at the Baruch College of the City University of New York and formerly Director of the Institute for Jewish-Christian Relations of the American Jewish Congress.*

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# Conservatism against Itself

***Christopher Lasch***

The question before us is whether cultural conservatism is compatible with economic liberalism, the political philosophy of capitalism. Since the answer will depend, in the first place, on just what is meant by cultural conservatism, I propose to begin, not with an abstract definition of this term, but with an analysis of the way in which conservative values enter the current controversy about abortion—the best example of the cultural conflict that is polarizing American society.

Kristin Luker's study of the abortion controversy shows that it originates not in abstract speculation about the rights of the unborn but in opposing views of life and more specifically in opposing views of the future. "I think people are foolish to worry about things in the future," an anti-abortion activist declares. "The future takes care of itself." Another woman active in the pro-life movement says that "you can't plan everything in life." For the pro-choice forces, however, the "quality of life" depends on planned parenthood and other forms of rational planning for the future. From their point of view, it is irresponsible to bring children into the world when they cannot be provided with the full range of material and cultural assets essential to successful competition. It is unfair to saddle children with handicaps in the race for success: congenital defects, poverty, or a deficiency of parental love. Teenage pregnancy is objectionable to advocates of legalized abortion not because they object to premarital sex but because adolescents, in their view, have no means of giving their offspring the advantages they deserve.

For opponents of abortion, however, this solicitude for the "quality of life" looks like a decision to subordinate ethical and emotional interests to economic interests. They believe that children need ethical guidance more than they need economic advantages. Motherhood is a "huge job," in their eyes, not because it implies long-range financial planning but because "you're responsible, as far as you possibly can be, for *educating and teaching them . . . what you believe* is right—moral values and responsibilities and rights." Women opposed to abortion are not convinced that financial security has to be seen as an indispensable precondition of motherhood.

"The values and beliefs of pro-choice [people] diametrically oppose those of pro-life people," Luker writes. Pro-life activists regard motherhood as a demanding vocation and resent the feminist disparagement of housework and motherhood. They agree that women ought to get equal pay for equal work in the marketplace, but they do not agree that unpaid work in the home is degrading and oppressive. What they find "disturbing [in] the whole abortion mentality," as one of them puts it, "is the idea that family duties—rearing children, managing a home, loving and caring for a husband—are somehow degrading to women." They find the pretense that "there are no important differences between men and women" utterly unconvincing. They believe that men and women "were created differently and . . . meant to complement each other." Upper-middle-class feminists, on the other hand, see the belief in biologically determined gender differences as the ideological basis of women's oppression.

Their opposition to a biological view of human nature goes beyond the contention that it serves to deprive women of their rights. Their insistence that women ought to assume "control over their bodies" evinces an impatience with biological constraints of any kind, together with a belief that modern technology has liberated humanity from those constraints and

Christopher Lasch *is Watson Professor of History at the University of Rochester. He is the author of* The Culture of Narcissism *and* The Minimal Self. *This essay and the following one by Jerry Z. Muller were originally presented at a conference on Cultural Conservatism and Economic Liberalism sponsored by the Institute on Religion and Public Life in New York City.*

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made it possible for the first time to engineer a better life for the human race as a whole. Pro-choice people welcome the medical technologies that make it possible to detect birth defects in the womb, and they cannot understand why anyone would knowingly wish to bring a "damaged" child, or for that matter an "unwanted" child, into the world. In their eyes, an unwillingness to grant such children's "right not to be born" might itself be considered evidence of unfitness for parenthood.

For people in the right-to-life movement, this kind of thinking leads logically to full-scale genetic engineering, to an arrogant assumption of the power to make summary judgments about the "quality of life," and to a willingness to consign not only a "defective" fetus but whole categories of defective or superfluous individuals to the status of non-persons. A pro-life activist whose infant daughter died of a lung disease objects to the "idea that my baby's life, in a lot of people's eyes, wouldn't have been very meaningful. . . . She only lived twenty-seven days, and that's not a very long time, but whether we live ninety-nine years or two hours or twenty-seven days, being human is being human, and what it involves, we really don't understand."

Perhaps it is the suggestion that "we really don't understand" what it means to be human that most deeply divides the two parties to the abortion debate. For liberals, such an admission amounts to a betrayal not only of the rights of women but of the whole modern project: the conquest of necessity and the substitution of human choice for the blind workings of nature. An unquestioning faith in the capacity of the rational intelligence to solve the mysteries of human existence, ultimately the secret of creation itself, links the seemingly contradictory positions held by liberals—that abortion is an "ethical private decision" and sex a transaction between "consenting adults" but that the state might well reserve the right to license pregnancy or even to embark on far-reaching programs of eugenic engineering.

The uneasy coexistence of ethical individualism and medical collectivism grows out of the separation of sex from procreation, which makes sex a matter of private choice while leaving open the possibility that procreation and childrearing might be subjected to stringent public controls. The objection that sex and procreation cannot be severed without losing sight of the mystery surrounding both strikes liberals as the worst kind of theological obscurantism. For opponents of abortion, on the other hand, "God is the creator of life, and . . . sexual activity should be open to that. . . . The contraceptive mentality denies his will, 'It's my will, not your will.' "

If the abortion debate confined itself to the question of just when an embryo becomes a person, it would be hard to understand why it elicits such passionate emotions or why it has become the object of political attention seemingly disproportionate to its intrinsic importance. But abortion is not just a medical issue or even a woman's issue that has become the focus of a larger controversy about feminism. It is first and foremost a class issue.

Lower-middle-class culture, now as in the past, is organized around the family, church, and neighborhood. It values the community's continuity more highly than individual advancement, solidarity more highly than social mobility. Conventional ideals of success play a less important part in lower-middle-class life than the maintenance of existing ways. Parents want their children to get ahead, but they also want them to be good: to respect their elders, resist the temptation to lie and cheat, willingly shoulder the responsibilities that fall to their lot, and bear adversity with fortitude. The desire "to preserve their way of life," as E. E. LeMasters writes in a study of construction workers, takes precedence over the desire to climb the social ladder. "If my boy wants to wear a goddamn necktie all his life and bow and scrape to some boss, that's his right, but by God he should also have the right to earn an honest living with his hands if that is what he likes."

Sociologists have observed, usually with a suggestion of disapproval, that working people seem to have no ambition. According to Lloyd Warner, working-class housewives set the dominant tone of cultural conservatism. They adhere to a "rigid" and "conventional" code of morality and seldom dare to "attempt anything new." Proposals that seem to represent "departures from the conventional way of doing things" meet with their automatic condemnation. These housewives clearly have a "strong determination to do their tasks well" and derive "deep satisfaction from discharging their responsibilities to their families and to their friends," but they take no interest in long-range goals. "Their hopes are basically centered around carrying on [and] take the form of not wanting their present routine disturbed—they want to continue as they are, but, while doing so, better their circumstances and gain more freedom."

Anthony Lukas makes the same point, without censure, in his remarkably even-handed account of the Boston school wars of the mid-seventies. Lukas contrasts the "Charlestown ethic of getting by" with the "American imperative to get ahead." The people of Charlestown, deserted by the movement of more ambitious neighbors to the suburbs, have renounced "opportunity, advancement, adventure" for the "reassurance of community, solidarity, and camaraderie."

Upper-middle-class observers cannot conceal their contempt for what they see as petit-bourgeois fatalism. An essay attempting to explain "Underutilization of Medical-Care Services by Blue-Collarites" notes that social classes in America are divided by contrasting conceptions of the body. "It is as though the white-

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collar class thinks of the body as a machine to be preserved and kept in perfect functioning condition, whether through prosthetic devices, rehabilitation, cosmetic surgery, or perpetual treatment, whereas blue-collar groups think of the body as having a limited span of utility: to be enjoyed in youth and then to suffer with and to endure stoically with age and decrepitude." One might suppose that working-class realism should be morally preferable to the upper-middle-class conception of the body as a machine requiring "perpetual treatment." The authors of this article, however, draw the opposite conclusion. A stoic acceptance of bodily decline, they argue, reflects a "damaged self-image."

An analysis of recent cultural conflicts reinforces the conclusion prompted by exposure to conservative traditions of political and social thought, that the essence of cultural conservatism is a certain respect for limits. The central conservative insight is that human freedom is constrained by the natural conditions of human life, by the weight of history, by the fallibility of human judgment, and by the perversity of the human will. Conservatives are often accused of an exaggerated esteem for the past, but it is not the moral superiority of the past so much as its inescapability that impresses them. What we are is largely inherited, in the form of gender, genetic endowment, institutions, predispositions—including the universal predisposition to resent these constraints on our freedom and to dream of abolishing them. What was called original sin, in a bygone age, referred to the most troubling aspect of our natural inheritance—our natural incapacity for graceful submission to our subordinate position in the larger scheme of things.

No doubt conservatives have been too quick to confuse submission to the natural limits on human freedom with submission to established political authority. The existing distribution of political power is not ordained by nature, let alone by heaven; but it does not follow, because our institutions can be modified by an act of collective will, that we can become anything we choose or even that we can alter the political conditions of our existence without paying a price. The value of conservatism lies in the understanding that those who seek to escape the past forfeit any hope of coming to terms with it and expose themselves to an unexpected return of the repressed; that we can never wholly overcome our origins; and that freedom, accordingly, begins with an acknowledgment of the constraints within which it has to operate.

Conservatism is not necessarily authoritarian and hierarchical in its implications. If conservatives are insufficiently critical of existing institutions and the traditions behind them, it is because their understanding of human fallibility makes them see the need for structures that discipline the rebellious heart and at the same time provide moral support in the midst of life's uncertainties and disappointments. The same appreciation of human weakness and rebellion has egalitarian implications that can counter the tendency to equate social order with hierarchy.

Another countervailing tendency in conservative thought is the preference for local over centralized authority. Precisely because conservatives understand how easily we succumb to temptation, the temptations of power most of all, they try to see to it that power is dispersed as widely as possible. A sense of limits reveals itself, in another way, in the conservative belief that we love and respect particular individuals, not humanity as a whole, and that the seductive promise of universal brotherhood is a poor substitute for local communities in which the holders of power are immediately accountable to their neighbors.

If conservatism is understood to imply a respect for limits, it is clearly incompatible with modern capitalism or with the liberal ideology of unlimited economic growth. Historically, economic liberalism rested on the belief that man's insatiable appetites, formerly condemned as a source of social instability and personal unhappiness, could drive the economic machine—just as man's insatiable curiosity drove the scientific project—and thus ensure a never-ending expansion of productive forces. For the eighteenth-century founders of political economy, the self-generating character of rising expectations, newly acquired needs and tastes, and new standards of personal comfort gave rise to a form of society capable of indefinite expansion. Their break with older ways of thinking lay in the assertion that human needs should be regarded not as natural but as historical, hence insatiable. As the supply of material comforts increased, standards of comfort increased as well, and the category of necessities came to include goods formerly regarded as luxuries. Envy, pride, and ambition made human beings want more than they needed, but these "private vices" became "public virtues" by stimulating industry and invention. Thrift and self-denial, on the other hand, meant economic stagnation. "We shall find innocence and honesty no more general," wrote Bernard Mandeville, "than among the most illiterate, the poor silly country people." The "pleasures of luxury and the profit of commerce," according to David Hume, "roused men from their indolence" and led to "further improvements in every branch of domestic as well as foreign trade." Both Hume and Adam Smith argued that a growing desire for material comforts, wrongly taken by republican critics of commerce as a sign of decadence and impending social collapse, generated new employments, new wealth, and a constantly rising level of productivity.

Smith did not hesitate to call attention to the morally problematic features of the new order. Because he was so confident that the beguiling prospect of universal abundance would sweep aside any lingering

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objections to its ethical implications, he could afford to acknowledge that liberal capitalism was fueled by ambition, vanity, greed, and a morally misplaced respect for the "pleasures of the vain and empty distinctions of greatness." In the "languor of disease and the weariness of old age," the moral insignificance of worldly goods appeared in its true light, according to Smith, since neither possessions nor even the beauty and utility so widely admired in "any production of art" proved capable, under conditions of adversity, of bringing true happiness. Man seldom looked at the matter in this "abstract and philosophical light," however; and "it is well that nature imposes upon us in this manner," Smith wrote in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in a passage that alluded for the first time to the "invisible hand" that leads men to accumulate wealth and thus inadvertently to serve as social benefactors in their pursuit of deceptively attractive but ultimately empty possessions. "It is this deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind."

The philosophers of plenty, even if they remained untroubled by the "deception" at the heart of their system, could not entirely suppress the more practical reservation that a social order founded on the promise of universal abundance might find it hard to justify even the minimal sacrifices presupposed by an otherwise self-regulating economy. Hume pointed out that an ethic of abundance might weaken even the residual inclination to defer gratification. Human beings "are always much inclin'd to prefer present interest to distant and remote," he observed; "nor is it easy for them to resist the temptation of any advantage that they may immediately enjoy." As long as "the pleasures of life are few," this form of temptation did not pose a great threat to social order. Commercial societies, however, could be expected to intensify the pursuit of "feverish, empty amusements"; and the "avidity . . . of acquiring goods and possessions," Hume warned, "is insatiable, perpetual, universal, and directly destructive of society."

In the nineteenth century, the hope that commerce would make men "easy and sociable," not acquisitive and rapacious, came to rest largely on the institutionalization of deferred gratification supposedly provided by the family. Nineteenth-century philanthropists, humanitarians, and social reformers argued with one voice that the revolution of rising expectations meant a higher standard of domestic life, not an orgy of self-indulgence activated by fantasies of inordinate personal wealth, of riches painlessly acquired through speculation or fraud, of an abundance of wine and women. That a commercial society fostered such ambitions troubled them no end, and it was to counter this tawdry dream of success, this unbridled urge to strike it rich, that proponents of a more orderly economic development attached so much importance to the family. The obligation to support a wife and children, in their view, would discipline possessive individualism and transform the potential gambler, speculator, dandy, or confidence man into a conscientious provider. By tying consumption to the family, the guardians of public order hoped not only to stimulate but to civilize it. Their confidence that new standards of comfort would not only promote economic expansion but level class distinctions, bring nations together, and even abolish war is impossible to understand unless we remember that it rested on the domestication of ambition and desire.

In the long run, of course, this attempt to build up the family as a counterweight to the acquisitive spirit was a lost cause. The more closely capitalism came to be identified with immediate gratification and planned obsolescence, the more relentlessly it wore away the moral foundations of family life. The rising divorce rate, already a source of anxious concern in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, seemed to reflect a growing impatience with the constraints imposed by long-term responsibilities and commitments. The passion to get ahead had begun to imply the right to make a fresh start whenever earlier commitments became unduly burdensome.

Economic development weakened the economic as well as the moral foundations of the "well ordered family state" so highly prized by nineteenth-century liberals. The family business gave way to the corporation, the family farm—more slowly and painfully—to a collectivized agriculture ultimately controlled by the same banking houses that had engineered the consolidation of industry. The agrarian uprising of the 1870s, '80s, and '90s proved to be the first round in a long, losing struggle to save the family farm, enshrined in American mythology, even today, as the *sine qua non* of a good society but subjected in practice to a ruinous cycle of mechanization, indebtedness, and overproduction.

Capitalism's relentless erosion of proprietary institutions furnishes the clearest evidence of its incompatibility with anything that deserves the name of cultural conservatism. There is obviously a good deal to be said, from a conservative point of view, for the institution of private property, which teaches the virtues of responsibility, workmanship, and self-subordinating devotion to humble but indispensable tasks. Twentieth-century capitalism, however, has replaced private property with a corporate form of property that confers none of these moral and cultural advantages. The transformation of artisans, farmers, and other small proprietors into wage-earners undermines the "traditional values" conservatives seek to preserve.

Even the "family wage," the last attempt to safeguard the independence of the producing classes, has gone the way of the family business and the family farm. It is no longer an unwritten law of American capitalism that industry will attempt to maintain

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wages at a level that allows a single wage to support a family. By 1976, only 40 percent of all jobs paid enough to support a family. This trend reflects, among other things, a radical de-skilling of the work force, the substitution of machinery for skilled labor, and a vast increase in the number of low-paying unskilled jobs, many of which, of course, are now filled by women. It also reflects the triumph of a consumerist ethic that encourages American males to define themselves not as breadwinners but as sybarites, lovers, connoisseurs of sex and style—in short as playboys, to use Hugh Hefner's revealing term. The idea that a man has an obligation to support a wife and family is just as distasteful to the editors of *Playboy* as it is to militant feminists, who have their own reasons for rejecting "family values."

The family wage was itself a poor substitute, even when practice conformed to theory, for proprietorship. In the early nineteenth century, it was almost universally agreed that democracy had to rest on the widest possible distribution of property ownership. After the Civil War, the emergence of a class of wage-earners—men and women with little hope of acquiring property—raised serious questions about the future of democracy.

Even those who had no quarrel with capitalism, like E. L. Godkin (editor of the *Nation* and the *New York Evening Post*), admitted the justice of the working man's aversion to "wage slavery." "The receipt of wages," Godkin noted in 1868, ". . . is regarded by the world as a badge of dependence, of social and moral inferiority." A man who worked for wages became a "servant, in the old sense of the word—a person who has surrendered a certain portion of his social independence." The objections to wage labor, Godkin added, were "very similar to those which may be alleged against the exclusion of a large proportion of the population from participation in the work of government. . . . Until the working classes take an intelligent and active part, that is, participate with their heads as well as their hands, in the industrial operations of the day, our social conditions must be pronounced unsound."

Godkin, a nineteenth-century liberal whose social instincts were thoroughly conservative, did not flinch, at least at first, from the implications of his position. The only way to preserve the moral advantages of individual proprietorship under modern conditions of production, he argued, was some form of cooperative enterprise. Otherwise "the owners of capital and the owners of labor must form two separate and distinct classes," each with its characteristic pathology—a snobbish and unwarranted sense of superiority in the one, servile habits of dependency in the other.

Godkin's only mistake lay in supposing that cooperative enterprise could flourish under a fully developed system of capitalist production. When hard-pressed farmers formed cooperatives in order to hang onto their land and avoid sinking into tenancy, the banks crushed their movement by withholding credit. The embattled farmers, organizing themselves as the Populist party, then sought credit from the federal government. This initiative too was defeated with the help of conservatives like Godkin, who were horrified by the suggestion that the state could legitimately interfere with the laws of supply and demand—the first step toward communism, in their view.

What conservatives did not seem to understand was that the laws of supply and demand had already been abrogated by a whole series of policies that discriminated in favor of large business corporations at the expense of every other interest. In effect, governmental policy, not only in the United States but in other industrializing countries as well, subsidized one form of cooperation—the multi-million dollar corporation—while discouraging others. Neither small-scale property ownership nor its moral equivalent, cooperative enterprise among small producers and craftsmen, could flourish without the support of state policies far more radical than anything conservatives were prepared to consider.

Most conservatives, in fact, did not pursue the matter even as far as Godkin did. They did not admit the need for cooperation in any form. They thought of the corporation itself as if it were an individual under the law. They individualized workers as well, refusing to concede the need for working-class organization in any form. They clung to the delusion that wage-earning was only a temporary condition and that any worker could easily become a capitalist if he was determined to succeed. The pretense that proprietorship was still open to anyone with the requisite ambition discredited conservatism in the opinion of serious thinkers.

Herbert Croly, the founding editor of the *New Republic* and a guild socialist of sorts, summed up the whole question of proprietorship very clearly in 1914, at the same time that he explained what was wrong with the conservative answer. In an earlier America, "pioneer or territorial democrats," as Croly called them, "had every promise of ultimate economic independence, possessed as they were of their freeholds." But the private "appropriation of the public domain rapidly converted the American people from a freeholding into a wage-earning democracy" and raised the central question to which modern societies had not yet found the answer: "How can the wage-earners obtain an amount or a degree of economic independence analogous to that upon which the pioneer democrat could count?" Welfare programs, Croly argued—insurance against unemployment, sickness, and old age; measures enforcing safe and healthy conditions of work; a minimum wage—represented a very partial answer at best. Conservatives objected that such reforms would simply promote a "sense of dependence," and this criticism, Croly

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admitted, had a "great deal of force." The conservatives' own solution, however—"that the wage-earner's only hope is to become a property owner"—was so deeply inconsistent with the whole trend of modern industrialism that it was difficult to treat it "with patience and courtesy." The claim that saving and self-denial would enable workers to become proprietors was utterly unconvincing. "If wage-earners are to become free men"—and "the most important single task of modern democratic social organization" was to make them free men—something more than exhortations to work harder and spend less were going to be required.

That most conservatives have contented themselves with such exhortations provides a measure of the intellectual bankruptcy of twentieth-century conservatism. The bankruptcy of the left, on the other hand, reveals itself in the left's refusal to concede the validity of conservative objections to the welfare state. The only consistent criticism of the "servile state," as it was called by Hilaire Belloc, came from those who demanded either the restoration of proprietorship (together with the drastic measures required to prevent the accumulation of wealth and property in the hands of the few) or the equivalent of proprietorship in the form of some kind of cooperative production. The first solution describes the position of populists like Belloc and G. K. Chesterton; the second, that of syndicalists and guild socialists, who briefly challenged social democrats for leadership of the labor movement in the period immediately preceding World War I. According to Georges Sorel, the superiority of syndicalism to socialism lay in its appreciation of proprietorship, dismissed by socialists as the source of "petit-bourgeois" provincialism and cultural backwardness. Unimpressed by Marxian diatribes against the idiocy of rural life, syndicalists, Sorel thought, valued the "feelings of attachment inspired in every truly qualified worker by the productive forces entrusted to him." They respected the "peasant's love of his field, his vineyard, his barn, his cattle, and his bees."

That Sorel spoke of these possessions as things "entrusted" to man shows how radically he differed from Marxists, who shared the liberal view of nature as so much raw material to be turned to the purpose of human enjoyment. But he differed also from conservatives, who made a fetish of property ownership as such, not seeing that its value lay only in the encouragement it gave to craftsmanship, which could be encouraged in other ways. "All the virtues attributed to property would be meaningless without the virtues engendered by a certain way of working." It was not ownership so much as the opportunity for invention and self-reliance that made work interesting, and the same advantages could be recreated in factories, Sorel thought, once the workers themselves began to exercise responsibility for the design of production.

The syndicalist critique of capitalism carried real authority, because it rested on the insight that capitalism could not deliver on the promise that made it morally attractive in the first place—the promise of universal proprietorship. Syndicalists and guild socialists saw that slavery, not poverty, was the real issue, as G. D. H. Cole put it. They saw that the reduction of labor to a commodity—the essence of capitalism—required the elimination of all the social bonds that prevented the free circulation of labor. The destruction of the medieval guilds, the replacement of local government by a centralized bureaucracy, the weakening of family ties, and the emancipation of women amounted to "successive steps in the . . . cheapening of the raw material of labor," all achieved under the "watchword" of progress. Whereas Marxists accepted the collectivizing logic of capitalism and proposed simply to collectivize production more thoroughly, syndicalists, populists, and guild socialists condemned modern capitalism for profoundly conservative reasons—because it required (in the words of A. R Orage, editor of *New Age*) the "progressive shattering to atoms of our social system."

In the twentieth century, conservatism has incongruously allied itself with the free market, including the free market in labor. What passes for conservatism, in other words, has allied itself with the very forces that have brought about the "progressive shattering to atoms of our social system." The defense of conservative values, it appears, cannot be entrusted to conservatives. If conservatism implies a respect for limits, localism, a work ethic as opposed to a consumerist ethic, a rejection of unlimited economic growth, and a certain skepticism about the ideology of progress, it is more likely to find a home in the populist tradition than in the free-market tradition of mainstream conservatism.

It is suggestive that the American right owes much of its recent success to its claim to stand in the populist succession. Spokesmen for the new right present themselves, like the populists of old, as the enemies of wealth and privilege, champions of the "average man on the street," in the words of George Wallace: the "man in the textile mill," the "man in the steel mill," the "barber" and "beautician," the "policeman on the beat," the "little businessman." The right's attack on the "new class" invokes social classifications steeped in populist tradition, appealing to the "producing classes" to rise up against a parasitic class of professional problem-solvers and moral relativists. Thus William Rusher refers to the emergence of a "'verbalist' elite," "neither businessmen nor manufacturers, blue-collar workers or farmers," as the "great central fact" of recent American history. "The producers of America," Rusher says, ". . . have a common economic interest in limiting the growth of this rapacious new non-producing class."

The importance of "social issues" in the rise of

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the new right—abortion, affirmative action, busing, education, the media, liberal "permissiveness"—has often been noted. These issues dramatize the conflict between the family-centered culture of the lower middle class and the enlightened culture of upper-middle-class professionals. No doubt racial resentments have also contributed to the rise of the new right, but to see nothing more than a "white backlash" in the rejection of liberalism is to miss the class antagonisms underlying the cultural civil war. What is being rejected is not just racial liberalism but the whole "culture of critical discourse," as Alvin Gouldner has described the outlook of the new class—the impatience with constraints imposed by the past, the belief that personal and intellectual growth demands a repudiation of our parents, the eagerness to question everything, the habit of mockery and irreverence. Petit-bourgeois values, as we have seen, are directly opposed to the enlightened ethic of personal liberation and self-discovery. They are the product of experiences that are more likely to foster an awareness of the limits that thwart human aspiration than a sense of endless possibility. It was these petit-bourgeois values that informed the populist tradition in the past and now find expression in the cultural politics of the new right.

The cultural populism of the right is a populism largely divested of its economic and political content, and it therefore does not address the issue that ought to engage the imagination of conservatives: how to preserve the moral advantages of proprietorship in a world of large-scale production and giant organizations. This question poses such formidable difficulties that attempts to grapple with it can easily lead to frustration and a sense of futility. Nevertheless, it is an inescapable question, and not only for cultural conservatives.

The dominant ideology in the West, the ideology of progress, has always rested on the expectation that economic abundance would eventually give everyone access to leisure, cultivation, refinement—advantages formerly restricted to the wealthy. Luxury for all: such was the dream of progress at its most compelling. Even if this were a morally desirable goal, however, it is no longer a feasible goal, since the resources required to sustain universal affluence, hitherto imagined to be inexhaustible, are currently approaching their limit. A more equitable distribution of wealth, it is now clear, requires at the same time a drastic reduction in the standard of living enjoyed by the rich nations and the privileged classes.

Under these conditions, the old ideal of a competence—a piece of earth, a small shop, a useful calling—becomes a more reasonable as well as a more worthy ambition than the ideal of abundance. In the populist tradition, "competence" has rich moral overtones; it refers to the livelihood conferred by property but also to the skills required to maintain it. The ideal of universal proprietorship embodies a humbler set of expectations than the ideal of universal consumption, universal access to a proliferating supply of goods. At the same time, it embodies a more strenuous and morally demanding definition of the good life.

How to revive it, under social conditions that make it more desirable than ever but institutionally almost inconceivable, ought to be the main subject of contemporary political debate. Our grandchildren will find it hard to understand, let alone to forgive, our unwillingness to raise it. FT

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# Minding Our Manners and Morals

***Jerry Z. Muller***

We begin with the observations of a social critic of cultural conservative leanings—let his name, for the moment, remain a mystery—as he casts his gaze upon the cultural influence of the market.

New forms of capitalist economic organization, he notes, have led to the disappearance of the link between ownership of property and civic responsibility. People are so involved in acquisition, he laments, that they no longer have time for political concerns and public life. He sees an eclipse of civic virtue, a diminishing willingness to sacrifice private concerns for the public good.

Changes in social structure brought about by capitalist development are no less worrisome. The process of the market is leading to the replacement of once-independent producers by men who are mere specialized cogs in a productive machine.

The cultural consequences of capitalism are cause for despair. The ever-shifting, international fashions on which the market thrives are destroying authentic, indigenous culture. New forms of capitalist merchandising prosper by arousing novel desires, creating tastes for consumer goods that people do not really need, and leading to excessive expenditure that is bankrupting the economy.

Most pernicious of all in their influence are unprecedented marketing techniques which undermine the steadying influence of the family by invading the household itself.

These criticisms may have a familiar, contemporary ring. But they were penned more than two hundred years ago by Justus Möser (1720-1794), a conservative German social critic in Westphalia, then an economic backwater on the margins of the burgeoning Atlantic capitalist economy. International fashion meant scarves from Flanders; the "luxuries" which the peasants *thought* they needed but which the conservative social critic knew they really didn't (or to change the idiom, the objects of their "false consciousness") included wool stockings, metal buttons, mirrors, knives, and needles. The novel vehicles of capitalist merchandising were weekly markets and peddlers. The weekly market Möser regarded as a spoiler of morals because it took women out of the protected confines of the household and the supervision of their husbands. He argued against such markets on the grounds that they would draw women and children away from the "bourgeois tranquility" of the home and into the marketplace where they would chat and waste money on snacks and pleasantries, while ignoring their household duties. The peddler was worse still, bringing the temptations of market into the home itself: the peddler appeared at the peasant woman's door and appealed directly to her, in the absence of the steadying presence of her spouse. Once again, the market was portrayed as the destroyer of custom and tradition.

By the time Möser got around to lamenting that new forms of capitalism were destroying traditional political institutions and cultural mores, such complaints were already old hat in the more developed nations of Great Britain and France, and these themes have been echoed with variations during the ten generations that separate his time from ours.

Since the eighteenth century there have been two broad arguments against capitalism: that it made people poor and that it made people rich. For most of the nineteenth and part of the twentieth century the first argument was dominant among the critics of the market economy. This argument has now declined, but we have seen a rebirth of the older theme, which condemns capitalism for making people

Jerry Z. Muller, *Associate Professor of History at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., is the author of* The Other God that Failed: Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism. *He is at work on a book on capitalism in modern European thought.*

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richer—richer, that is, than the cultural critic knows they really *ought* to be.

Those whom we might call the "gloomers and doomers" have been telling us for over two hundred years that traditional values and institutions are under fatal assault, that all that gives life higher meaning is about to be drowned in a sea of consumption, of getting and spending, of hedonism, or of desire unleashed, and that society is disordered as a result. Society is always in a state of degeneracy according to one intellectual or another. "Society is today in a state of extreme moral disorder; egotism is making terrible progress, everything tends toward isolation," wrote Saint-Simon early in the nineteenth century. According to Balzac, "The family no longer exists today; there are only individuals." In 1858, Tocqueville wrote to Gobineau that "for the moment, people believe strongly in nothing, they hate nothing, and they hope for nothing except to profit at the stock exchange." A century later, John Lukacs was echoing the old complaints, writing of "our interregnal condition of moral and cultural chaos." More than a decade after that, the new regnum had still not arrived, and Lukacs was lamenting "the surfeit of affluence . . . the spoiled and corrupt state of our societies." Like the poor, the prophets warning of cultural gloom and civic doom are always with us: sometimes on the left, sometimes on the right, sometimes in indeterminate positions in between.

I don't mean to mock or dismiss their claims, but only to bring to bear some historical perspective on the recurrence of jeremiad. Is it really plausible that society is always in a state of moral degeneracy, always in moral decline; that the valuable institutions of the past are always being destroyed, replaced by self-interest and hedonism; that the market is constantly destroying the bonds of religion, public life, and community; that the vulgarity of the newly rich, the squalor of the poor, the mindless, cloying quest for material improvement by the middle classes who want what they don't need, have all reached unprecedented proportions?

To dismiss the warnings of the gloomers and doomers as old whine in new bottles, however, would be ill-advised. They are sometimes right, or at least half-right: but right in the same way as the stock market analyst who regularly warns that the stock market will collapse. Every so often he's right, and then he can look back in satisfaction and claim that he was only premature in his timing. But just as following the advice of the stock-market Jeremiah means ignoring the strengths of the economy and losing the opportunity to profit from the market when he is wrong, so the cultural Jeremiah may cause us to overlook the continuing vitality of pre-capitalist and non-capitalist institutions in capitalist societies, leading us to forego opportunities for prudent cultural investment. Even those of us inclined by historical experience to be less gloomy than the pessimists about the prospects of cultural conservatism in a market economy may learn from them, if we take their complaints seriously but without accepting them at face value. Moral critics of the cultural failings of a liberal, capitalist society may have a beneficent effect, if by reminding us of the weaknesses of such societies they aid in repairing those weaknesses or in obviating the dangers inherent in them.

## II

But before we pursue this line of thought, it is worth recalling the lamentable historical role of those moral diagnosticians whose radical critiques have helped to delegitimate past liberal-capitalist societies. Typically, these diagnosticians stress the cost of such societies without an awareness of their benefits; or they judge such societies wanting by measuring them against romanticized models from the past, while remaining so vague about future alternatives that it becomes impossible to weigh the costs and benefits of the existent against their proposed replacements. The danger to and from such critics is that their unbalanced assessment may attract them to a political cure worse than the disease itself. Here, again, we may profit from historical example.

Take the radical conservative critique of liberal, capitalist society. Radical conservatism shares many of the *concerns* of traditionalist conservatism, such as the need for institutional authority and continuity with the past, but maintains that the processes characteristic of modernity have destroyed the valuable legacy of the past for the present, and that a restoration of conservative values can only be achieved through radical state action. Radical conservatism is thus a revolt against existing liberal and capitalist institutions in the name of authority. It seeks to use state power to ensure that institutions will exert a far stronger hold on the individual than do existing ones, which are perceived by radical conservatives as "decayed."

Political liberalism, according to radical conservatives, is fatally flawed because it fails to deal with man as a totality, as the product of a particular social group with a distinct cultural past. The inability of political liberalism to provide a sense of common, shared purpose, they claim, leaves the individual without a sense of higher purpose and threatens social integration, while the egoism of individuals or of economic interest groups displaces the preservation of shared culture as the goal of politics. Economic liberalism—the capitalist, market economy—in turn contributes to the destruction of a shared sense of common cultural purpose. For the logic of the capitalist quest for profit does not stop at the nation's borders, but leads to the internationalization of technology and consumption and thus the destruction of the traditional culture of historical communities.

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The net result is to cut men off from their historical roots, to destroy any sense of common culture and collective purpose, leaving an "atomized" society populated by lonely and purposeless addicts of consumption. Such, in a nutshell, was the critique of liberal-democratic capitalist society purveyed by the most articulate intellectuals of the radical right in inter-war Europe. Redefine the purported source of community—by dropping or fudging the definition of national community as based upon a shared biological and cultural past—and you have the standard critique of liberal-democratic capitalism of contemporary communitarians of the left.

Dismayed by what they too regarded as the "interregnal" present (a.k.a. "critical epochs"), radical conservatives (like some of their counterparts on the anti-liberal and anti-capitalist left) were on the lookout for political movements and leaders who might inaugurate a new "organic" age of shared purpose, in which each individual would derive a sense of meaning and purpose through commitment to some shared political project. They hoped to use politics to make men more virtuous, through a leader and a *movement willing to use state power to subordinate* the economic and cultural realms to the collective purposes of the nation, conceived as the product of a purportedly shared past and common historical culture. It was this logic that led German radical conservatives to support Hitler and National Socialism, and led their counterparts elsewhere to the support of other fascist movements.

Many of the most perspicacious radical conservative intellectuals, incidentally, became disillusioned with the regimes to which they had looked for radical political solutions to the perceived ills of liberal-capitalist democracy. Even before national self-assertion led to war and unparalleled terror, they discovered that the expansion of state power in the name of collective purpose led not to greater virtue or self-sacrifice, but to hypocrisy, new forms of individual and organizational egoism, and the violation of real, existing cultural allegiances in the name of purportedly shared values and national interests.

It is useful to recall the historical experience of the inter-war radical conservative critics of liberal capitalism. Errors of theory which have had disastrous effects on practice in the past may do so again in the future. Indeed, with the widely noted decline in the major ideological challenge to liberal capitalism from the left—the universalist and egalitarian ideology of Communism—the major international threat to liberal-democratic capitalist movements and regimes is likely to come from various species of radical conservatism. It is true that radical conservatism is likely to remain a marginal phenomenon in American intellectual and political life. But the conceptual errors of radical conservatism are relevant to some contemporary criticisms of liberal capitalism in America and abroad which maintain that such regimes necessarily destroy communities of blood, belief, or shared, non-material purpose and thereby undermine cultural conservatism.

## III

One can hardly dispute the notion that capitalism erodes long-established and once-revered institutions and traditions: indeed, this has been one of the claims of analysts of capitalism who were well disposed toward it. Adam Smith, for example, described with irony and relish the way in which the spread of market relations undermined the political and juridical power of aristocracies lay and clerical, and he celebrated the decline in traditional social relations of direct dependence as one of the moral advantages of commercial society. More conservative critics of the spread of the market economy bemoaned the loss of a firm, fixed sense of "knowing one's place" brought on by the spread of market relations. Above all, the expansion of wealth and technology brought about by capitalism leads to the diminution of those elements of tradition based upon absolute material scarcity.

All of this is hardly disputed. I do, however, want to cast doubt upon the claim of communitarian critics of capitalism old and new, according to whom the dissolution by the forces of liberal capitalism of a society based on traditional hierarchy, hereditary status, and common nominal faith enforced by the state leads to rootless, atomized individuals motivated by hedonism and manipulated by advertising. Such has been the recurrent idiom of political communitarians left and right, who conclude that the only solution is a political philosophy or civic religion based upon restoration of a sense of community.

Both this description of liberal-democratic capitalist societies and the normative prescriptions that flow from it rest upon recurrent conceptual confusions.

Such societies are *not* communities in almost any sense of the word. Their citizens rarely share a particular religious faith or other common ultimate commitments, and they are often unrelated by blood or by a shared past. (Though sometimes religious faith, history, and even language are redefined to make what was once perceived as disparate appear common and shared.) Models of political life drawn from idealized versions of the ancient Greek *polis*, covenants between the ancient Hebrews and their God, medieval Christian political theology, pre-modern Germanic villages, New England theocratic towns, or Jeffersonian-tinged echoes of a republic of small property-owners are of rather limited utility in describing American society or prescribing its goals. One might think that by now this would be taken for granted, yet a remarkable amount of contemporary academic political philosophy and political rhetoric is based upon repressing this most basic fact of social life.

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But if contemporary capitalist societies are not communities of purpose in any of these historical senses, neither are they mere conglomerations of atomized self-interested individuals, as some libertarian champions and communitarian critics of contemporary capitalism seem to imagine. Rather, they are made up of multiple communities, few of them all-encompassing in the manner of communities past, and on the whole more voluntary than older forms of community. These include associations created by common market interests as well as communities of shared descent, shared belief, or shared commitment based upon pre-market, non-market, and anti-market values. It is the latter sorts of communities which cultural conservatives are likely to champion. The theme that the existence of such communities is a necessary prerequisite for the stability of liberal societies—or more radically, that it is mainly in such communities that individuals in a market society acquire a sense of ongoing identity—has been offered with variations by thinkers as diverse as Adam Smith, Hegel, Tocqueville, and Hayek.

A frequent error among cultural conservatives, however, stems from a certain absence of historical imagination. It is the failure to recognize that some of the institutions they seek to preserve have themselves been altered and adapted over time, that the shape and functions of the family, for example, have changed with conditions and are amenable to considerable alteration without losing their purpose. While the notion that gender roles are entirely social constructions from which we may depart with impunity is rightly objected to by conservatives who call attention to what they regard as anthropological constants, some conservatives underestimate the flexibility with which enduring social needs can be met. The image of parental roles, for example, in which nurturing is limited to the mother and the world of work confined to the father is itself a historical rarity, and modifications of this model are not necessarily a mark of decline, as some cultural conservatives imagine. Similarly, the church and synagogue have survived by changing, by adapting their visions and roles to historical circumstances. The propensity to freeze the image of the institutions it seeks to conserve may be counter-productive to cultural conservatism.

Yet if they are not intrinsically antipathetic to the traditional forms of community so valued by cultural conservatives, liberal polities and capitalist economies *do* influence *which* aspects of a cultural tradition will survive. The so-called "Calvinist ethic," for example—which was not part of early Calvinism, and which we know is hardly confined to Calvinists—may have come to the fore within Calvinism precisely because of its compatibility with the emerging market economy. And it is worth recalling how much of what is now regarded as "traditional" and in need of conservation is a product of capitalism and the bourgeois traditions upon which it has depended and which it has helped reinforce, such as the emphasis on the virtue of deferred gratification or the orientation toward control of one's environment.

Capitalism may also contribute to the recasting of older traditions by allowing for the co-existence of diverse cultural communities. The loosening of plausibility structures which this brings about creates greater pressure within each community to subject its assumptions to critical examination. While this process is abhorred by some cultural conservatives, it may result not in the dissolution but in the reconceptualization and even purification of cultural traditions.

Thus it is quite wrong to suppose that what existing communities are trying to conserve is unitary or uniform. Rather, multiple communities seek to conserve different visions of the good or virtuous life. This is often ignored by communitarians, and forgotten by some cultural conservatives. In so doing, they overlook the link between political liberalism, economic liberalism, and cultural conservatism.

## IV

It was the premise and promise of modern political liberalism that communities of men and women with radically divergent ultimate commitments could co-exist and even prosper in the same polity. The price of this was a narrowing, indeed a limitation, of the political realm. A good definition of classical political liberalism is the one used by the contemporary German political philosopher, Hermann Lübbe. Political liberalism, he writes, is "the institutionally established non-identity of individual interest with collective interest. The logic of its institutions limits the claims of the collectivity to necessities; it therefore preserves the separation of the private and public spheres. The experience of unrestricted solidarity remains particular, primarily familial, and the experience of universal fraternity on the basis of collective interests remains narrow."

That those of differing ultimate commitments can cooperate and co-exist without a broad shared consensus about the meaning of life is also the promise of economic liberalism.

By economic liberalism I mean the principled disposition to favor market mechanisms of allocation and exchange, based on the pursuit of self-interest in the economic realm; together with a propensity toward skepticism regarding the role of government in economic life, not out of the libertarian belief that government is intrinsically evil, but rather from the perception that government is frequently inefficient in performing large-scale tasks of economic coordination and from the observation that government measures ostensibly taken for the public interest often disguise the pursuit of particular interests by public means. I do not mean a principled antipathy to the role of government or to the tax revenues that allow

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it to fulfill its proper roles. On the contrary, at least since Adam Smith it has been recognized that the more a society advances economically (in terms of the expansion and intensification of market relations and of the division of labor) the *greater* the absolute need for government expenditure: for defense, infrastructure, law, education, and for projects required by the collectivity but not profitable to individuals.

The arguments for political liberalism (in the European sense, or what is now sometimes called "classical liberalism") and for economic liberalism were frequently linked. Though there have been frequent attempts to unlink them conceptually, the lesson of modern history would seem to be that one cannot have a liberal polity and a thriving civil society without a large measure of economic liberalism.

It is too often forgotten today that political liberalism developed out of motives that were essentially conservative. Liberal theorists of early modern Europe sought to formulate a theory of the state that would allow for the conservation of multiple, existing traditions. In so doing, they were forced to discard much of classical republican and Christian political theory, both of which conceived of the state as the preserver of a single, shared vision of the good life (though of course these earlier traditions differed in their conceptions of the good life). The hot and cold wars of religion that marked the early modern period were the turning point on the road to political liberalism, for as men judged that the cost of imposing a unified vision of the common good was too high, they sought to define a more restricted core of politically imposed obligations upon which men of differing ultimate commitments might agree, and hence live together without murdering or otherwise oppressing one another in the name of salvation.

If political liberalism considered people primarily as bearers of rights, it was because its focus was on the limits of what government could legitimately demand, not because political liberals believed that people were only or primarily bearers of rights. Liberalism began as a philosophy of politics, not of humanity in its entirety. Yet those who today define themselves as "liberals" too often confuse liberalism as a theory of politics with liberalism as a theory of life; they confuse *political* liberalism with an ideology of *cultural* liberalism which regards liberty primarily as freedom *from* the past and *from* institutions and the conventions that maintain them. Cultural liberals of this sort make non-conformity into a virtue. They are loathe to articulate any judgment on the moral worth of cultural practices for fear of appearing intolerant, unprogressive, or illiberal. When understood in this sense, liberalism becomes a kind of moral laissez-fairism in which each individual is encouraged to do as he or she likes so long as it does not directly injure another (or even to injure another, if the other likes being injured.)

A wiser strand of liberalism, one that goes back at least as far as Smith and Madison and forward to thinkers such as Hayek, regards political liberty as possible only when there is a considerable degree of voluntary acceptance of existing norms and institutions. As Gertrude Himmelfarb writes in the conclusion of *On Liberty and Liberalism: The Case of John Stuart Mill,* her profound inquiry into the transformation of political liberalism into cultural liberalism, "Liberals have learned, at fearful cost, the lesson that absolute power corrupts absolutely. They have yet to learn that absolute liberty may also corrupt absolutely. . . . A people that cannot respect the principles of prudence and moderation is bound to behave so imprudently and immoderately as to violate every other principle, including the principle of liberty."

This conservative brand of political liberalism (to which I am clearly partial) welcomes the pluralism provided by political liberty precisely because it allows those with a diversity of identities informed by historical traditions to live together in relative peace. It holds that cultural conservatism, political liberalism, and economic liberalism are, on the whole, compatible—full of possible tensions, to be sure, but not necessary contradictions.

The many thinkers who have asserted that there is a necessary link between political liberty, a market economy, and cultural conservatism have typically focused on the role of what the Scottish Enlightenment called "manners," or what Tocqueville called "mores" or "habits of the heart": on moral norms of autonomy, responsibility, and self-restraint transmitted primarily in the private sphere, above all in the family and other intimate associations. They have insisted that these virtues upon which a market economy and liberal polity depend are inculcated within institutions based upon affection and commitment and hence fundamentally different from contractual, market relations.

Some contemporary conservatives suffer from a confusion of realms when they forget that manners and mores may be matters of the greatest moral and political concern without necessarily being matters of government coercion. This quick resort to the law may be comforting to cultural conservatives justifiably concerned with our mores. But in a liberal polity, most questions of morality will (and should) necessarily remain beyond the sphere of the state, not because they are unimportant, but precisely because they are of great importance. That leaves two not insignificant spheres for the propagation of cultural conservatism: the market of ideas which we call the cultural realm, and the market for consumer goods.

## V

Yet it is here that some critics of contemporary capitalism believe they have found its Achilles heel. They argue that liberal-capitalist democracy is

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in decline precisely because the capitalist market must constantly arouse new needs and desires in order to create new demand. The culture of consumption, they argue, destroys the norms of restraint traditionally championed by conservatives, and the spread of the consumerist mentality beyond the realm of consumer goods leads to a declining sense of commitment and stability in those intimate spheres where the mores of autonomy and self-restraint were once cultivated. Christopher Lasch is perhaps the most articulate contemporary American expositor of this line of analysis, which is a variation on what Albert Hirschman calls the "self-destruction thesis," the notion that capitalism undermines the moral foundations on which any society, including its own, must rest.

Are these critics right?

Given that such claims have been made for so long, one ought to take them with a grain of salt. Of the argument "that capitalism has the knack of doing away with all in its 'legacy' that is good and functional," Hirschman asks, "Is it conceivable that any historical formation would have such an unerring, schlemiel-like instinct for going wrong?" "Highly unlikely," one is prompted to answer, especially given the increasing evidence that in the battle of historical forms, capitalism is beating the competition.

Cultural critics from Vance Packard and Herbert Marcuse through Christopher Lasch and Barbara Ehrenreich have tended to focus on advertising with its increasingly hedonistic appeals, accepting at face value the claims of those who create such advertising that its message is internalized by most consumers. Yet social scientists who have tried to submit such claims to empirical tests (such as the sociologist Michael Schudson, in his *Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion*) have found that most consumers are highly skeptical of advertising messages because "advertising is propaganda and everybody knows it" and that advertising is generally ineffective in persuading consumers to buy new or unwanted goods. The recently published *Wall Street Journal Centennial Study* similarly indicated that the correlation between advertising and consumer choice is weak for most consumers.

While impressionistic cultural critics of "consumer capitalism" overrate the role of advertising and of the market for consumption goods as active forces in the transformation of cultural values, they understate the extent to which the market for consumer goods *follows* cultural values, not least values connected to institutions that foster conservative manners, mores, or habits of the heart. One would hardly know from these critics the extent to which consumption remains centered on the family and its well-being, or the degree to which new consumer goods can contribute to family life (a theme recently explored in the iconoclastic book by Ferdinand Mount, *The Subversive Family: An Alternative History of Love and Marriage*). That the largest chunk of consumer spending is on housing, motivated primarily by the desire to provide space and decent schools for sons and daughters; that microwave ovens (among the most successful consumer goods of the last decade) are purchased because they allow couples to spend less time cooking and more time with each other and with their offspring; that video cameras are valued primarily in order to document and preserve the progress of growing children—these are facts that one would hardly imagine from the lamentations of those who regard consumerism as the antithesis of cultural conservatism.

Similarly, critics who focus on the cultural costs of economic development tend to overlook its cultural benefits. The criticism of the modern large-scale bureaucratic corporation as fostering a culture of work antipathetic to family life may be exaggerated, but it is not without foundation. Yet in this regard, too, the development of new technology by the market economy may actually enhance family life. For new forms of technology (home computers and facsimile machines linked by telephone wires, for example) may allow for a decentralization of work, hence reversing the century-long trend toward a separation of residence and place of work. The recrudescence of high-tech cottage industry ought to be welcomed by cultural conservatives.

The major fault in the argument of those who insist that there is a contradiction between capitalism and cultural conservatism, however, is the failure to engage in serious comparisons between capitalism and non-capitalist alternatives, a necessity if one is to distinguish the effects of capitalism from concurrent trends such as urbanization, the division of labor, and technological changes—all of which occur in modern *non*-capitalist economies as well. The notion that the market economy is more antipathetic to cultural conservatism than are alternative modern forms of economic organization is often assumed, but never argued systematically or demonstrated empirically.

Yet even if they reject Lasch's claim that cultural conservatism and capitalism are necessarily incompatible, culturally conservative liberals ought to be alarmed by the delegitimation of non-egoistic activities in the private, familial realm to which Lasch calls our attention. Often this has its source outside the market: in the culture of therapy, in some strands of contemporary feminism, in the unbridled self-assertion of those who have been taught that all cultural standards are arbitrary products of past structures of power, as well as in the individualistic hedonism of "the Playboy philosophy" to which Ehrenreich and Lasch have pointed.

One need not believe that the market is the prime mover in this process to agree that some of what is purveyed by our mass media and paid for by profit-seeking corporations through advertising revenue *is* profoundly antipathetic to cultural conservatism, and

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that its effects are exacerbated by the extent of its diffusion. Yet even here I suspect that the market is a two-edged cultural sword, and that the same quest for profit which leads some corporations to subvert culturally conservative values can be used to reinforce them. I have in mind the ultimate weapon of the consumer—the power of the purse, in the form of the consumer boycott of stores which market pornography and of advertisers who sponsor violence and sexual degradation on television. Cultural conservatives ought to consider the greater use of such market mechanisms to correct the potentially deleterious cultural effects of the profit-oriented mass media. To be sure, they will be denounced as violaters of the First Amendment rights of producers and directors by those cultural liberals who forget that the First Amendment applies only to government. But this strategy in no way conflicts with "political liberalism properly understood" (to adapt a formulation from Tocqueville), and it is surely not beyond the means of cultural conservatives to develop a thick skin against the verbal slings and arrows of those whose understanding of liberalism is less informed than theirs.

In short, then, political liberalism, the market economy, and cultural conservatism, while in potential and even necessary tension with one another, are capable of being mutually reinforcing. If, as I have argued, the consumer market reflects cultural values more than it shapes them, then the cultural defense of institutions based upon relations of intense affection and lasting commitment that differ fundamentally from the liberty offered by the polity and the market takes on added significance. For it is in such sub-political and sub-economic institutions that "character" is formed: an important truth, and hardly a new one (but then few new truths are important).

Institutions in which characteristics of restraint, altruism, and moral autonomy are cultivated are in need of public defense, not (as some conservatives imagine) primarily in the political realm, where the stakes are the use of governmental force, but in the public sphere of cultural and educational institutions. The proper role of cultural conservatism so conceived is to proclaim—or better yet, to explain—that some institutions really are better than others. Some will proclaim on the basis of faith, maintaining that conservative morals conform to divine will; others may argue on the philosophical grounds of natural law. Or, like many of the masters of social science, they may attempt to weigh the costs and benefits of historical institutions, to discover not only why some institutions may be in need of reform or replacement, but also why certain traditional institutions are *irreplaceable*. What we should learn from the Jeremiahs of anti-capitalist doom and gloom is not to repent of economic liberalism, but to mind our manners and morals. FT

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# The Next Line of Hills: The Challenge of Peace Revisited

***George Weigel***

Who could have imagined, on that May afternoon in 1983 when the National Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted "The Challenge of Peace," that senior figures in the American Catholic opinion elite would concede, by the end of the decade, that the bishops' pastoral was, in a sense, "already dated"? Yet that is precisely how Father David Hollenbach described TCOP at a Catholic University of America conference this past fall. And who, in truth, could disagree?

For who could have imagined, seven years ago, that by 1990 Solidarity editor Tadeusz Mazowiecki would be prime minister of Poland? Or that the Hungarian Communist Party would, on its own initiative, declare itself no longer Marxist-Leninist, but "social democratic"? Or that the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia would declare their sovereign independence from Moscow—and not get themselves invaded for their pains? Or that virtually all religious prisoners of conscience would be released from the Gulag? Or that Soviet foreign minister Eduard Schevardnadze would publicly embrace Richard Perle's description of the Krasnoyarsk phased-array radar as "an open violation of the ABM Treaty"? Or that the Berlin Wall would have been breached? Or that Alexander Dubcek would be celebrated at a mass rally in Prague's St. Wenceslaus Square? Or that Rumania would, virtually overnight, overthrow the Ceausescu tyranny?

It has been, to say the least, an extraordinary seven years. Would a different kind of pastoral letter—one less beholden to the nuclear freeze movement; one with a more measured assessment of Reagan administration policy; one less dependent on the orthodoxies of the arms control mandarins for its understanding of the political function of nuclear weapons, its analysis of the deterrence system, and its image of the way to a measure of peace (or nuclear stability)—worn better over the intervening years? Probably. Do the weaknesses of the document (which may appear clearer to some eyes than they did in 1983) vitiate the chances of TCOP's making an enduring contribution to the debate? I don't think so—*if* we engage those weaknesses seriously, without polemics, and with the openness to new evidence that has characterized modern Catholic social ethics at its best.

My purpose here is not to recapitulate the extended critique of TCOP that I made in *Tranquillitas Ordinis* (although given the way that critique has been misrepresented in some quarters, the temptation to do so is great). Rather, I want to survey at least a few peaks on the "next line of hills" in the American Catholic (and ecumenical) war/peace debate, drawing from TCOP where appropriate, and extending or correcting its analysis and prescriptions as necessary.

## II

TCOP was distinguished, theologically, by the bishops' attempt to argue for the "complementarity" of pacifism and the just war tradition as Catholic moral perspectives on the problem of peace, security, and freedom. A difficult business at best, the bishops' problems on this front were compounded by terminological imprecisions that have continued to confuse the war/peace debate since 1983.

The division, as I understand it, is not between "non-violence" and "the just-war tradition" (cf. TCOP #120), but between *pacifism* (in a Christian

George Weigel *is the president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., and the author of* Catholicism and the Renewal of American Democracy.

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context, the evangelically grounded and principled refusal to take a human life, even in a "just cause") and the just-war tradition. Non-violence and the just-war tradition are not antithetical. Although attempts have been made to build "non-violence" into what amounts to a *weltanschauung*, non-violence is essentially an ensemble of techniques (non-violent resistance and non-violent direct action) for effecting social change (as in the American civil-rights movement) or, more grandly, a means for achieving a non-military defense of one's community or nation (as in Gene Sharp's proposals for "civilian-based defense"). Sharp, America's foremost theoretician and historian of non-violence, is himself not a pacifist, and neither were many of the leaders of the civil rights movement. TCOP's implicit assumption that non-violence is "for pacifists only" takes just-war theorists out of the discussion about effective non-violent means of forcing social change or defending community interests, and seems to suggest a kind of pacifist monopoly on non-violent resistance and direct action. This is historically false, and draws the boundaries of the debate on non-violence too narrowly (ignoring, for example, the success of democratic legal and political systems as instruments for non-violent conflict resolution).

The same terminological imprecision continues to bedevil the use of the term "nuclear pacifism." What is termed "nuclear pacifism" is in fact a set of judgments (about either nuclear war or the threat of escalation to nuclear war from a conventional war between the superpowers) that is based, not on pacifist moral premises, but precisely on the just-war norms of proportionality (*ad bellum* and *in bello*) and discrimination. I continue to suspect that the nomenclature "nuclear pacifism" was, and is, used on the assumption that identification with pacifism places one on the moral high ground, so to speak. Since this is, at best, a dubious proposition, I think we would all be better off if things were called by their proper names. "Nuclear pacifism" isn't pacifism, and it shouldn't describe itself as such.

Those American Catholics who choose the pacifist option must confront more than problems of semantics, however. They, and the rest of us, have to confront the sorry history of American pacifist acquiescence in others' violence over the past twenty years: a tragic history laid out in great detail in Guenter Lewy's recent study, *Peace and Revolution: The Moral Crisis of American Pacifism* (Eerdmans, 1988). I believe that Lewy's understanding of the proper pacifist role in American public life is deficient; but his historical research is impeccable, and the astounding inability of most pacifist organizations to respond to his critique by anything other than *ad hominem* attacks is further reinforcement for Lewy's basic claim that there is a deep moral decay in the American pacifist enterprise. That decay has not, as yet, metastasized to so great a degree in American Catholic pacifist organizations. But it could: which is why Lewy's work is an unavoidable cautionary tale for those who want an American Catholic pacifism that could contribute to the quest for peace and freedom.

## III

Mythologists like Richard P. McBrien notwithstanding, the heart of my critique of TCOP had to do not with the bishops' entry into the debate (which was long overdue), and not even with their "prudential judgments" (wrong-headed as I thought some of them were), but with the letter's lack of close attention to the classic Catholic understanding of "peace" as *tranquillitas ordinis*—the peace of rightly ordered and dynamic political community. Put another way, TCOP failed to teach that the just-war tradition is in fact a theory of statecraft. The just-war tradition is not merely a moral calculus through which one determines when the resort to war is morally legitimate, and what conduct within war is morally acceptable. No, in addition to the *ius ad bellum* and the *ius in bello,* the just-war tradition, in its logic and in the interstices of its mutually reinforcing principles, contains within itself a *ius ad pacem* (to adopt a neologism I coined in *Tranquillitas Ordinis*): a theory of this-worldly peace whose deepest roots go back to Augustine, but whose more sophisticated development came in the medieval and renaissance theologians, jurists, and commentators. Failure to explore (and exploit) this rich and thick body of social-ethical reflection had two unfortunate results: a letter that was far more a "weapons pastoral" than a "peace pastoral," and a wider American Catholic debate on the challenge of peace notable for the absence within it of the distinctively Catholic concept of that challenge.

This lacuna in TCOP had other consequences. Had the bishops, for example, more carefully explored the linkage between peace and freedom—had they framed the discussion of nuclear weapons in terms of the root ideological conflict between East and West *and* the need for positive political change in adversary states as an essential component of "peace" conceived as rightly ordered political community within and among nations—TCOP might not seem quite so "dated" today. For if the past several years have demonstrated anything, it is that progress on arms control, arms reduction, and disarmament follows changed political attitudes and behaviors. The threat of nuclear war seems less pressing today than in 1983, not because there are fewer nuclear weapons in the world; not because senior Defense Department officials are no longer talking about "prevailing" in a nuclear war; not because there are more exchange programs between Americans and Soviets; and not because the Carnegie Corporation, the MacArthur Foundation, and others spent tens of millions of dollars in the early 1980s "warning" Americans about "the danger of

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nuclear holocaust"; but because of changed behavior on the part of the Soviet Union. Nuclear weapons, in other words, and contrary to the logic of the freeze movement and the anti-nuclear activism of the early 1980s, were not the disease, but one drastically inflamed symptom of the disease.

The changes of the recent past go far beyond the bilateral U.S./Soviet relationship, of course. Why does peace seem to be breaking out all over in Europe? Again, not because of radical change in the configuration (which is to say, imbalance) of Warsaw Pact and NATO conventional forces, but because change in the Soviet Union has been paralleled by a process of de-Leninization + cultural liberalization + political democratization + market economics in central and eastern Europe which now seems irreversible—short of a massive, post-Gorbachev Soviet invasion and occupation.

These striking events and others seem to me to confirm the classic Catholic heritage in its claim that peace is a matter of rightly ordered political community within and among nations. The INF Treaty, the principal arms control success since TCOP, was not the result of anti-nuclear activism (as claimed by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and other European activists), nor was it the child of an isolated negotiating process. Rather, the negotiating process succeeded because of a changed political relationship between the U.S. and the USSR, which was in turn made possible by changed declaratory and on-the-ground policy by the USSR. Desirable change on the weapons front followed desirable change on the political front.

Had TCOP paid more attention to peace as a matter of the structure of politics within and among nations, the Church would also have been in a better position to help shape the debate over America's role in the democratic revolution in world politics. In *Tranquillitas Ordinis* I argued that the quest for democracy in totalitarian and authoritarian countries was one expression of the quest for peace—the peace, again, of "dynamic and rightly ordered political community." Viewed from another angle, the democratic revolution was the structural component of the human rights revolution which the Church had championed—*and* linked to the pursuit of peace—since *Pacem in Terris* (1963). David Hollenbach once accused me, in this matter, of endorsing a "crusade for democracy," with particular reference to the tangled business of building peace, security, freedom, and prosperity in Central America. The formulation "crusade for democracy" struck me as a bit much then; what I was proposing, after all, was (primarily non-military) support for indigenous democrats who had asked U.S. assistance for their cause. And I would argue that the course of events since—in the Philippines, South Korea, Chile, Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Argentina, Brazil, and a number of other locales—has tended to confirm my claim that the democratic revolution makes an invaluable contribution to the quest for peace with freedom and justice in this sort of world. Moreover, it is surely one of the most striking developments of the past decade that the democratic revolution has been actively supported by the Holy See.

One hopes that such support, and particularly support for a prudent yet creative American engagement with the democratic revolution, will come from the formal leadership of American Catholicism in the 1990s. That the bishops are not, now, perceived as a significant institutional supporter of the work of the National Endowment for Democracy is a sadness—a sadness that could easily be remedied.

Finally, the democratic revolution raises the question of what might be called "grand linkage" or grand strategy in TCOP. At Catholic University last October, David Hollenbach argued that "the ethical debate about deterrence must simultaneously address the question of how to preserve security, improve the human-rights and economic situations in both East-West and global contexts, and reduce the danger of nuclear war—all at the same time," and suggested that "a few years ago, the suggestion that all these areas of policy should be linked together would have produced ideological fireworks in almost any forum." Well, not precisely *any* forum. The entire *political* argument of *Tranquillitas Ordinis* was aimed at recovering the "grand strategic" sense which had informed the classic Catholic heritage in its insistence on the inseparability of weapons issues (i.e., issues of arms control, arms reduction, and disarmament) from larger political contexts. I certainly don't claim to have foreseen the rapidity of political change in the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries. When I wrote about "pluralizing" or "de-Leninizing" the Soviet Union, I was thinking in terms of generations, not half-decades or decades. It is encouraging that Catholic social ethicists like David Hollenbach agree that "there is now at least a realistic possibility that the threat of nuclear war and the denial of human rights can be simultaneously reduced." But for the sake of the historical record I think it should be acknowledged that some of us were at least exploring that possibility—and its roots in the Catholic heritage of *tranquillitas ordinis*—before Mikhail Gorbachev made his welcome entrance onto the stage.

## IV

To say that the Catholic quest for peace ought to be framed, in the first instance, in terms of the politics of peace within and among nations is not to suggest that weapons issues aren't important. Four issues seem particularly worth exploring in the post-TCOP environment.

First, I think we need to clarify what TCOP called the "new moment" in international politics brought

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about by nuclear weapons. I would argue that, *in terms of moral analysis*, the "new moment" preceded the development of nuclear weapons; rather, the "new moment"—the point at which modern technology began to put tremendous strain on the classic *in bello* criteria of the just-war tradition—came with the advent of long-range bombers capable of delivering masses of high explosives to civilian targets. To argue for an earlier "new moment" is not to diminish or minimize the gravity of the moral problem of nuclear weapons. But it is to suggest that Theodore Hesburgh, among others, was simply wrong when he stated that the bishops in 1983 found themselves in a unique historical situation in which "there were no precedents to invoke, no history to depend upon for a wise lesson, no real body of theology except for that which dates back to pacifism or a just-war doctrine that was first applied in a day of spears, swords, bows, and arrows, not ICBMs." That is not the logic of TCOP, which rightly argues that the classic criteria of moral assessment remain true and relevant, even if the conclusions to be drawn from them will bring little comfort to some in the policy community. But too fevered an emphasis on the unique destructive capacity of nuclear weapons may lead (and in some quarters, may have already led) to a view of TCOP in which the letter is interpreted so as to teach that nuclear weapons render the moral insights of the just-war tradition nugatory.

Second, we need a continued debate on the relationship between weapons modernization and the pursuit of arms control, arms reduction, and disarmament. TCOP suggested, obliquely, that the emplacement of Pershing II missiles in Western Europe would create further obstacles to peace. Now these things are impossible to nail down with arithmetic precision, but it does not seem illogical or implausible to argue that it was precisely the emplacement of the Pershing IIs (after a massive and Moscow-endorsed anti-modernization campaign in Western Europe) that led, in relatively short time, to the completion of the INF Treaty with its *elimination* of intermediate-range nuclear weapons and delivery systems from the European theater. At the very least, one cannot argue that INF modernization impeded arms reduction and disarmament. We ought to be extremely cautious about deriving general modernization-plus-negotiation principles from this single episode. But it was, it seems to me, an instructive experience.

Third, we need a new debate on strategic defenses. At the level of capabilities, the old (seven years old!) SDI debate seems to have been largely resolved in favor of the technological possibility of effective strategic defense systems—albeit defense systems short of an "Astrodome" over the United States. Assuming that the present pattern of U.S./Soviet relations holds—admittedly, a large "if"—the focus of the strategic defense debate may well shift from the superpower conflict to the nightmare scenario of the 1990s: the dreadful, yet not unlikely, combination of crazy states + chemical or gas warheads + IRBMs. It is not an accident, for example, that the State of Israel has been perhaps our most enthusiastic partner in SDI research. Do the moral criteria of TCOP and the bishops' follow-on 1988 *Report* preclude *any* development and deployment of strategic defenses?

I should certainly hope not. The combination of technological feasibility and international instability in volatile regions of the world makes it likely, bordering on probable, that the 1990s will see some deployment of strategic defense capabilities. So the task for moral reason will be to try to shape those deployments so that they contribute to the evolution of a measure of order in international public life. I would be loath to see the Church virtually eliminate itself from that debate because of a rigid acquiescence to old arms-control orthodoxies which may be increasingly irrelevant in the superpower context, and which are certainly less than persuasive in the context of, say, an Iraq or a Libya with gas-tipped IRBMs and the will to launch them at Tel Aviv.

Finally, the 1990s may well see a newly intensified effort at major conventional arms reduction in the European theater. Here, too, "weapons issues" will—or ought to be—linked to issues of political change within and among the countries of the Warsaw Pact. Can the Catholic war/peace debate, on both sides of the Atlantic, contribute to the fleshing out of the image of a "common European home"? We shall see.

## V

I continue to believe that the Catholic tradition carries the most sophisticated package of moral understandings on this matter of war and peace, security and freedom, of any of the major Christian traditions. I also believe that Catholicism in America has a distinctive role to play in shaping public moral discourse about our country's role in world affairs. Indeed, if anything has brought the classic Christian moral understandings contained in the just-war tradition into the American public debate over the past decade, it has been the American Catholic argument before and after TCOP. It is no secret that I think we could have done better, and done more. But I don't doubt that the challenge of peace is still before us, and that we have resources at hand to help meet that challenge.

Old alliances are breaking up, and new arguments forming, in the U.S. foreign policy debate. Assuming, again, that U.S./Soviet relations continue in their present pattern, it seems likely that there will be a great interventionist/isolationist debate in the 1990s. New expressions of isolationism on the left will intersect and make common cause with a renascent America Firstery on the right. The interventionist or internationalist camp itself will be riven by arguments between unilateralists and multilateralists. In this new

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configuration of intellectual and ideological forces, somebody will have to continue to press the case for an American foreign policy in which the concept of national interest does not become crabbed and narrow and the concept of national purpose does not drift off into either messianism or globaloney.

I think American Catholicism could be that "somebody": if we clarify our understanding of the just-war tradition as a theory of statecraft and not simply a theory of hardware; if we thoughtfully probe the relationship between political change and arms control, arms reduction, and disarmament; and if we avoid the temptation to take our strategic or political cues from any one faction or camp on the current political spectrum. So many "ifs" may make for a long bet. But it seems to me a bet still worth making. FT

## WISTERIA

Here it comes again,
after shamming dead all winter,
stretching, flexing, limbering, unleashing
hordes of feather-cut leaves that look
like dragon tongues, a silty river bronze,
before they flatten to assume
their summer-long, grass-emulating green.
Gone in a few days from dry
sticks and frizz to rampant, virid vine,
it fans out an advance guard
of tentacle-tendrils itching with intent
to get a purchase somewhere, anywhere,
by means of those unshowy but efficient
grappling hooks that stud
their wiry length like blunt, vestigial thorns.
It scrambles up and onward
always by spiralling round whatever
stands in its path—drainpipe, porch pillar,
/lawn chair—
but then, once anchored, corkscrews round
itself, amassing braided cables
of self-hugging self-satisfaction,
the conquering hero's doublejointed
pat on his own back, the unbridled
ego trip impelled by uppity sap
from deepest root to farthest outflung tip,
ecstatically, imperially
quivering toward its vegetal entelechy.
It's then I intervene, unshackle
the captive clothesline post, prune back
that onslaught to a standstill: several times
a summer hacking through the worst intrusions,
severity which seems but to encourage
further incursions.
Why not have an end,
enlist some two-handed engine to smite once
and smite no more? It must be that we need
each other, complementary claimjumpers
locked in contest through the drowsiest
spells of heat, continually rousing
each other to claw back ceded tracts
of still disputed territory.
And
it's worth it, too (I say, sweeping up heaps
of stemmy trash), to see how every May
before these rank, voracious leaves
abound, the blossoms burst from the bare wood
(prized by the Chinese for this, and prized by me),
fountaining down in beads of wistful blue
like droplets of spring's mild sky congealed.

**Robert B. Shaw**

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# The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Transcendental Subject

***Leslie E. Gerber***

At the time of the publication of Michael Sandel's *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* in 1982, Oliver Sacks was writing many of the "clinical tales" for his remarkable *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat.* This chronological parallelism notwithstanding, nothing would seem more improbable than a bringing into dialogue of these two works, for not only do they spring from disciplines breathtakingly remote from one another (political theory, neurology), they appear to have radically different centers of interest. Sandel wishes to refute the moral epistemology underlying John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* and thereby call the entire Rawlsian contractual scheme into question. Sacks narrates episodes from his experience as a neurologist. As his patients suffer from bizarre afflictions like Tourette Syndrome, anosmia (loss of the sense of smell), and deficient proprioception (the ability to sense one's own body), there is an unmistakable "freak show" appeal to the book. This accounts for its commercial success but also would seem to render it quite irrelevant to the preoccupations of Harvard political philosophy.

But whoever reads Sacks carefully will recognize the ample scope of his agenda. The neurological investigations consistently reach a philosophical level. Key "conversation partners" for Sacks are Plato, Kant, Hume, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, Frege, and Freud. Moreover, the work contains an extended argument with the "classical" neurology of Hughlings Jackson and Kurt Goldstein, who, according to Sacks, maintained that "the mind, man's glory, lies wholly in the abstract and categorical, and the effect of brain damage . . . is to cast him out of this high realm into the almost subhuman swamplands of the concrete." In his "defense" of the realm of the concrete and the "simple" people who, Sacks believes, have special access to it, he tries to offer an alternative view of the sources of their identity and dignity. But—albeit without reference to the mentally handicapped—*this is exactly the issue addressed by Michael Sandel.* One might even say that Kant and Rawls are to Sandel what Jackson and Goldstein are to Sacks. Thus, far from being irrelevant, both Sacks' research and his critique of his predecessors will have everything to do with Sandel's effort.

Sacks allows us to see that, interesting and persuasive as Sandel's account is, it is almost unbearably "thin." This is odd, because Sandel wishes to defend a communitarian vision of "constitutive attachments," a vision populated by "thickly constituted selves" with characteristics of moral depth, "weight," character, history, substantive friendships, and political passions which form them in their core. A reading of Sacks serves both to reveal the sparseness of Sandel's constructive program and to offer new avenues of exploration. When he speaks both of richly identified and "de-identified" patients, Sacks summons a vocabulary that is importantly different than that of Sandel. Sacks' key categories are memory, feeling, play, music, and, above all, narrative.

My primary attempt here is thus to show how Sacks functions as an indispensable supplement to Sandel—how any next formulation that Sandel makes will necessarily take up many of the concerns and notions that render Sacks' book such a milestone in philosophical medicine. I also wish to assemble from its several expressions a coherent statement of Sacks' notion of narrative as "the science of the concrete," for it seems to me that he offers important new ways

Leslie E. Gerber *is Associate Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies and Director of Watauga College at Appalachian State University.*

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of understanding the philosophic status of narrative.

## II

The object of Sandel's remarkable critique in *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* is "deontological liberalism," a doctrine indebted to Kant for its philosophical starting point and to Rawls for its most compelling contemporary expression. Deontological liberalism centers itself in a theory of justice and in the conviction that justice holds primacy among moral and political ideals. Sandel's main challenge is to this primacy claim, but in the process he seeks to derail the entire deontological project, including its moral epistemology and theory of the relation of persons to their ends. The stakes are very high here, for Sandel accepts as proven the deontological case against utilitarianism. Thus, if Rawls is proved inadequate (and, with him, Dworkin, Ackerman, and other neo-Kantian liberals), then Mill and his modern heirs cannot provide the alternative. The liberal field will be left to Sandel and other "communitarian" theorists, for whom "justice finds its limits in those forms of community that engage the identity as well as the interests of its participants" and for whom the hitherto "incompleteness of the liberal ideal" is corrected by a substantive notion of the good of community.

As Sandel explains it, Kant objected to utilitarianism because it presupposed the invariability of the content of the desire for happiness. This presupposition is an empirical one, Kant pointed out, and it will not bear scrutiny, for "our desires and the means of satisfying them typically vary, both between persons and over time." A moral theory may not be placed on so unstable a foundation. Moreover, given the variability of people's conceptions of happiness, it will inevitably happen that a just desire will be overridden by a consideration of general utility. The way out of this dilemma, maintained Kant, was to turn away from the ends which persons pursue to persons themselves *qua* sources of ends. Morality must be grounded in a non-empirical subject capable of an autonomous will: "a subject of ends, namely a rational being himself, must be made the ground for all maxims of action."

Thus, Kant's revolutionary move in moral theory parallels his "Copernican Revolution" in metaphysics: the re-location of principles (like temporality and causality) in the knowing subject. This strategy gives rise to the moral-philosophical thesis of the priority of the right over the good, since the latter pertains not to the self (the sole source of moral value) but to the ends which the self chooses for itself.

That which is fundamentally real in the Kantian moral world is thus a cosmopolis of noumenal selves, free and equal and rational and self-legislating, whose autonomy is qualified by the categorical imperative. Rawls' original position adopts this "kingdom of ends" scheme but interprets it as the key to a model *procedure* (the social contract), thereby rescuing Kant from his entrapment in a transcendent realm. Most of *A Theory of Justice* works out these procedural and (hence) political-ethical consequences of the veil of ignorance and the original position, and it is this material that has occupied most commentators. But Sandel insists that the Kantian moral subject which launches Rawls' endeavor remains determinative throughout. "We must be prepared to live with the vision contained in the [Rawls'] original position, mutual disinterest and all," he writes, "prepared to live with it in the sense of accepting its description as an accurate reflection of human moral circumstance, consistent with our understanding of ourselves."

Sandel's task thus becomes that of bringing to full clarity the theory of person, agency, and attachment that resides in Rawls' work. Moving skillfully through Rawls' account of such issues as meritocracy, common assets, ownership, contract theory, and affirmative action, Sandel finds the following:

(1) For Rawls, the plurality of subjects is given prior to their unity. Sandel often refers to this as "the notion of the antecedent individuation of the subject." This means that there is, so to speak, an *a priori* validation of the realm of distinct individuals; cooperative arrangements and relationships receive validation *a posteriori*, and instrumentally, in the light of experience.

(2) With respect to the self and its ends, Rawls' theory requires that "I must be a subject whose identity is given independently of the things I have, independently, that is, of my interests and ends and my relations with others." Sandel contrasts this "voluntarist" view with a "cognitive" one, in which "the ends of the self are given in advance . . . [and] the subject achieves self-command not by choosing that which is already given (this would be unintelligible) but by reflecting on itself and inquiring into its constituent nature, discerning its laws and imperatives, and acknowledging its purposes as its own."

(3) This distinction is extremely far-reaching, argues Sandel; e.g., it involves entirely different views of how it is that the self becomes disempowered and dispossessed. In the cognitive view, dispossession (and loss of self-command) involves a manner of forgetting which of the ingredients in a rich set of possible ends and purposes is most essential to the self's identity. In the voluntarist interpretation, ends consistently "drift away" from the self; the self, its bounds firmly pre-established, "invulnerable to transformation by experience," must "reach beyond itself, to grasp as an object of its will the ends it would possess, and hold them, as it always must, external to itself."

(4) Closely related to this view of agency is Rawls' understanding of the relation of self and community. Sandel's most compact formulation is this: for Rawls,

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"as a person's values and ends are always attributes and never constituents of the self, so a sense of community is only an attribute and never a constituent of a well-ordered society." In Sandel's cognitive or "intersubjective" understanding, it makes sense to speak both of a single moral subject as being the locus of a "plurality of selves" and of obligations attaching to families, communities, classes, or nations. The cognitive view sustains the claim that communities can become "constitutive" in the sense that persons are *essentially* describable in terms of them.

Perhaps the most persuasive element of Sandel's analysis of Rawls' "deontological vision" is his insistence that for Rawls' theory to work Rawls must in fact borrow from fuller accounts of community than his premises permit. For conservative readers, the hardest part of Rawls is his theory of distributive justice (or, as some would say, *re-distributive* justice) based on the difference principle. The core of that theory is the notion of "common assets." Those gathered behind the veil of ignorance accept that *all* endowments of the self, both natural and acquired, are in Rawls' phrase "arbitrary from a moral perspective." They come to agree that the assets which individuals wind up generating in the post-contract world must be allocated according to the difference principle. This is philosophically possible because, for Rawls, such assets are *not me*; they are not essential constituents of my identity but "alienable *attributes* of the self." Therefore, *I* am not being used as a means—my assets are.

This leaves Rawls with a radically disembodied subject, points out Sandel. As a consequence, Rawls is forced by his theory of justice to enrich the concept of "*my* assets," giving it intersubjective meanings not warranted by his theory of the self. Subtly—and, for Sandel, impermissibly—Rawls' language begins to suggest a distinctively social understanding of the notion of assets. Such language makes it seem plausible that, to propose an example, I as a talented surgeon might vote for some form of socialized medicine because I recognize how much "my skills" attest to the actions of others in, for, and upon me. But in doing so I must acknowledge a possessor of these assets which is a "we" in the constitutive sense. For Sandel, such a corporate "subject of possession" is officially ruled out by Rawls' deontological, individualist premises. Sandel discovers in *A Theory of Justice* a great number of notions and phrases suggestive of Rawls' parasitic attachment to corporatist views and intersubjective perspectives. For example, Rawls says that "only in the social union is the individual complete"; or, again, "the self is realized in the activities of many selves."

Sandel's alternative to Rawls is, of course, the ideal of "constitutive attachments" and "thickly constituted selves" whose ends are often allegiances. Such allegiances are "more than values" and "natural duties" owed to humans *qua* humans. They partly define the self, give it a history and a character. "Constitutive attachments" are seen by Sandel as giving agency "moral weight"; the self is "encumbered" with an identity that because of its density, complexity, and rootedness is only partially open to revision. This means that self-knowledge is very difficult and requires others for its achievement. Hence friendship is essential, for my friends can offer insights into my identity that persistently elude me. I do not "use" them for this purpose, for they are "in" me already by virtue of our complex intersubjectivity.

Concludes Sandel: "To see ourselves as deontology would see us is to deprive us of those qualities of character, reflectiveness, and friendship that depend on the possibility of constructive projects and attachments." So too would deontology attempt to rob us of a vibrant politics, for it insists on rigorously distinguishing public and private and seeing the political as fully external to the self. "By putting the self beyond the reach of politics, it makes human agency an article of faith rather than an object of continuing attention and concern."

## III

The view of the moral subject which gains expression in Oliver Sacks' "clinical tales" is entirely congenial to that proposed by Sandel. But Sacks' reflections—as well as the particular cases he chooses to reflect upon—provide a much richer picture of the subject and its identity than what Sandel offers. Sacks' "defectological" investigations invite us to locate "constitutive attachments" in games and play, in narrative and ritual, and especially in memory. More importantly, he causes us to re-evaluate the sense and meaning that attach to such notions as loss, asset, and, indeed, subjectivity. Given the prominence of these motifs, it is not surprising that Sacks writes what might be called "narrative neurology." In what follows, I will focus on three of these narratives—about Dr. P., Jimmie G., and Rebecca—showing how these develop the case for "a romantic science of the concrete" and bringing into play the moral language so wanting in Sandel's account.

Sacks is both sufficiently philosophical and sufficiently witty to have arranged *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* in a particularly intriguing ideational order. Chapter one (after which the book is named) is uncannily "Kantian," while chapter two ("The Lost Mariner") is partly an essay about Hume. Indeed, Dr. P., Sacks' first case study, is unmistakably a German, and the whole ordered texture of his music-teacher life reminds one of no one so much as Kant himself. Moreover, Dr. P.'s strange "visual agnosia" is a thoroughly Kantian affliction. For he has, in effect, lost the very ability to *have* an empirical experience (at least through the sense of vision). When Sacks places in his hands an object, P. proceeds to apprehend

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it as "about six inches in length . . . a convoluted red form with a linear green attachment." He is entirely content with this "identification." Under prodding he deduces that, because it lacks the simple symmetry of the Platonic solids, it *could be* "an inflorescence or flower." Without smelling it—this does not occur to him—he cannot name it as an early rose.

Thus, Dr. P. has in effect been reduced to a pure *a priori* transcendental subject. Sacks explains that he has even lost *judgment* in the sense of an ability to perceive identity in particulars. Although Sacks appeals to Kant when claiming that "judgment is the most important faculty we have," he means by judgment more than what Kant had in mind. For Sacks, the appalling thing about Dr. P. was the inhuman formality of his gaze—his inability to find a "thou" behind the faces presented to him. "Dr. P. *had* abstract attitude—indeed, nothing else." He was "positively Martian." The patient "recognizes" the objects of vision as does a computer, through establishing "marks" and comparing them to a schematism of such marks. Had Dr. P. possessed "judgment" in Sacks' sense, he would have had some feeling for the concrete, the personal, the particular, and for apprehending perceptual objects as wholes.

The case of Dr. P. certainly causes the reader to consult Kant once again on the issue of how the noumenal self connects with the world. But for our purposes, P. performs a different role. Sandel wants to locate identity in the history of particular communities, networks of friendship, and the molding of character. But the poor man "who mistook his wife for a hat" is finally sustained and identified by something much more specific: *music*. Dr. P. can finally recognize the world only if he "sings it" to himself. Sacks' therapeutic advice is therefore this: "Music has been the center, now make it the whole, of your life." Sacks speculates that P. "had no body-image, he had body-music."

Perhaps one could say that P. had become *habituated* to a life organized around music, and that when he generated music a system of identity-sustaining habits came into play. Music is partly communal in origin, so one might even say that P. is being sustained by an underlying historical musical community. Sandel has nothing to say about habituation, nor does he seem to be thinking of communities (or is it *traditions*?) of this type. Yet we have here an attachment that is evidently "constitutive" in the strongest sense of the term. Sacks' work thus invites reflections on forms of attachment that exist in dimensions of community left out of Sandel's account.

While Sandel wants to reject the deontological theory of the person, he does so in a different way than that marked out by what he calls "the sociological objection." As he explains it (he appears to be talking to Marxists), this view insists on the fundamentally social nature of humans, on their being conditioned "all the way down," and on the complete non-existence of noumenal selves. Neutrality is impossible, for the political order must embody *someone's* values; thus, the demands of justice are for a social order directed toward cooperation and an education productive of altruistic and benevolent citizens. Sandel sees this as a misunderstanding of deontological liberalism, which is fully compatible with cooperative virtues. The issue here, he insists, is whether, as Kant would claim, the principles of right are derived in a way that does not depend on any particular ends.

Moreover, Sandel worries about the implications of the sociological critique, for it seems to present an untenable image of selfhood. This image was, in fact, enunciated by Hume, who saw the self as "a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement." The sociological critic, without something like a Kantian anchor in the noumenal world, must find a principle of continuity of the self through time. Kant only insisted that this principle "precedes all experience, and makes experience possible." Sandel's answer is, of course, the communally situated self, whose ends are given *in* and *with* selfhood, so to speak, and whose character bestows an important component of unity. (Since Sandel does not explain the relation between "ends" and "character," it is a bit difficult to describe his position.)

Much in Sacks' book touches on this issue, but no case is more relevant than that of Jimmie G., "the Lost Mariner." A victim of Korsakov's Syndrome (brought on by alcoholism), Jimmie G. has "retrograde amnesia" and can recall only his youth and early adulthood. The profundity of his amnesia is unsettling. He animatedly reviews his life story (i.e., the first nineteen years of it) for Sacks, but after a two-minute pause, he cannot recall a word of what he just said. Quick-witted, very intelligent, he does well with games like checkers, but chess eludes him because it moves too slowly for him to hold its rules in mind. Similarly, quick mathematical computations offer no challenge, yet when problems require a great many steps, he loses orientation.

Sacks' description of the manner and degree of Jimmie's amnesia is poignant—and pertinent to our inquiry. Having quoted the same passage from Hume as did Sandel, Sacks writes of Jimmie: "In some sense, he had been reduced to a 'Humean' being—I could not help thinking how fascinated Hume would have been at seeing in Jimmie his own philosophical chimaera incarnate, a gruesome reduction of a man to mere disconnected, incoherent flux and change." Sacks urges him to keep a diary, but finds that Jimmie can neither recognize the entries nor comprehend the fact of his own authorship. Jimmie's brother makes visits; these encounters are joyous and break the reigning pattern of emotional indifference but "do nothing to provide any sense of continuity or history."

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Jimmie's deficiency of affect disturbs Sacks, who speaks of a loss of self so complete that "he cannot know it, because he is no longer there to know it." He wonders if the impression of utter superficiality often made by Jimmie signals his reduction to "a sort of Humean drivel," a "Humean froth," "a mere succession of unrelated impressions and events."

That Korsakov's Syndrome can produce this very possibility is clear from another sufferer, William Thompson (see chapter twelve, "A Matter of Identity"). The question Sacks asks the Sisters about Jimmie—"Do you think he *has* a soul?"—is asked also about this identity-less "person" and answered—gingerly, haltingly—in the negative. Sacks exclaims: "But William . . . is so damned he does not know he is damned." He continues: "For it is not just a faculty, or some faculties that are damaged, but the very citadel, the self, the soul itself." Jimmie at least manifests dissatisfaction with his condition: "He wanted to do, to be, to feel." Sacks assigns him typing tasks, and Jimmie finds some satisfaction at exercising a long-unused skill. He discovers the garden and works in it with uncharacteristic focus. Sacks sees that "Jimmie has *moods*, and a sort of brooding (or, at least, yearning) sadness, a depth, a soul, which does not seem present in Mr. Thompson."

Sacks' reflections about the Lost Mariner finally yield the conviction that when memory is gone, a claim to identity is still possible, but the source of this claim comes from an unexpected context of behavior. "Watch Jimmie in chapel," counsel the Sisters:

> I did, and I was moved, profoundly moved and impressed, because I saw here an intensity and steadiness of attention and concentration that I had never seen before in him or conceived him capable of. I watched him kneel and take the Sacrament on his tongue, and could not doubt the fullness and totality of Communion, the perfect alignment of his spirit with the spirit of the Mass. Fully, intensely, quietly, in the quietude of absolute concentration and attention, he entered and partook of the Holy Communion. He was wholly held, absorbed, by a feeling. There was no forgetting, no Korsakov's then, nor did it seem possible or imaginable that there should be; for he was no longer at the mercy of a faulty and fallible mechanism—that of meaningless sequences and memory traces—but was absorbed in an act, an act of his whole being, which carried feeling and meaning in an organic continuity and unity, a continuity and unity so seamless it could not permit any break.

Sacks notices that after chapel, Jimmie's mood of peaceful attentiveness persists for a time. He reports that while Jimmie's amnesia remains unutterably "dense," there has been spiritual formation. At times, he is "a different man altogether, . . . rich in all the Kierkegaardian categories—the aesthetic, the moral, the religious, the dramatic." Jimmie has thus avoided the "de-souling" that besets William. And yet even William, Sacks reports, seems to experience surcease from his "identity-delirium" when wandering in the garden. However fleetingly, he seems to be restored to "a sense of being in the world, being real."

Sandel's "communitarian" challenge to Rawls persistently emphasizes an alternative moral epistemology—the "cognitive" notion of agency. Over and over, Sandel stresses the different meanings that "reflexivity," "discovery," "inquiry," "self-knowledge," and "self-possession" acquire in his notion of the subject whose ends are "given in advance." But isn't Sandel's position—despite its superiority to Rawls'—simply *too cognitive*? Sacks' observations on Korsakov patients force one to engage the issue at pre- and sub-cognitive levels. Dr. P. is directed and unified by music and a musical tradition. Just as Kant would still have taken his philosophic walks even if he had contracted Korsakov's, so P. continues as P. by, so to speak, "waltzing through life." The Lost Mariner episode reminds us of the vital role of memory in the formation of subjectivity/identity. But here it is not Jimmie's personal memory, but that of a community whose memory is expressed in ritual performance. All the "agents" in the Mass suffered some degree of amnesia—the liturgy restored to *everyone* involved a "new"/old identity.

In many ways the "Rebecca" chapter is Sacks' most important, for in it he counters most fully Goldstein's thesis that the "world of the concrete" into which "defectives" are often precipitated is a fallen, dignity-less place. Nineteen-year-old Rebecca certainly dwells in a "concrete" realm "neither complicated, diluted, nor unified by abstraction." With an IQ of 60, severe myopia, cleft palate, congenital abnormalities in her hands, chronic spatial and kineseological inabilities ("a klutz," said one report), she gains little from the "developmental" workshops offered by the institution. Childlike, unable to open a door with a key, she first appeared to Sacks as "a casualty, a broken creature . . . a mere mosaic of higher cortical functions."

Rebecca is like William, Jimmie, and Dr. P. in that while she has (some) memory, she strikes Sacks as pattern-less, incomplete, "decomposed," "a cognitive mishap." She thus lacks that minimal coherence essential to human agency. Yet as he works with her, Sacks begins to see that his clinical descriptors fail to reveal the deep structure of Rebecca's condition. He notices the poetic reach of her phrases, her quiet delight in watching the spring foliage emerge, her fondness for stories. Though she cannot read, she demands of others that they read to her not only stories but poems, some of them quite complicated. (Her

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grandmother speaks of her "hunger for stories.") Like Jimmie she has a special responsiveness to liturgy. "She loved the lighting of the Sabbath candles," reports Sacks, "the benisons and orisons which thread the Jewish day." When her grandmother dies, Rebecca derives much from the rites of "sitting shiva."

These observations convince Sacks that neurology is philosophically impoverished. It requires nothing less than "a romantic science of the concrete." The "simpletons" of the world are often curiously "gifted" in their appropriations and apprehensions. To "heal" them means in part to see with them the actual world they inhabit. It is important to note that Sacks not only means by "concrete" a feeling-rich, immediate, intense realm of particulars. He also means a realm illuminated by symbols—*not concepts*. Thus, Rebecca is both "idiot" and "symbolist." She grasps the world via material taken from dreams and stories. The proper contrast to the concrete is "the paradigmatic" or "the schematic." The concrete is synonymous with "narrative"; thus, "narratology" is "the neglected and needed science of the concrete."

Further, while the paradigmatic and narrative forms of thought are both natural, Sacks emphatically holds that "the narrative comes first, has spiritual priority." As for the musical patterns that held and "composed" Dr. P., Sacks now sees that these also are narrative in form. Rebecca finds her identity in dance, music, drama, liturgy, image. During the time these narrative forms play themselves out, she has both identity and "capacity." That is, in narrative time *the entire category of "defect" disappears*. Sacks even suggests that notions of equality and "ethical depth" find their meaning most vividly within the enclosing structure of narrative.

I submit that Sacks here goes far beyond Sandel. For all its intriguing possibilities, Sandel's view of agency is impoverished. That his elegant and penetrating account of community could proceed without a single reference to memory, narrative, liturgy, or drama says much about the demands of the "paradigmatic" at Harvard.

## IV

In using Sacks' profound observations on an extreme neurological disorder, I have tried to point to dimensions of identity/community that need to be considered by Sandel. In doing so, I run the risk of making Sacks' work appear completely authoritative. Yet there are things to object to in *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, and, lovely as it is, Sacks' treatment of Jimmie's experience at the Mass is one. Sacks gives us here something like a portrait painting. In the scene, Jimmie "sits" alone for the portraitist, Sacks himself. Or, to change the metaphor, it is as if Jimmie were performing a "one-man show," a sort of eucharistic mime. Yet we know that besides the priest, there were undoubtedly also sisters, doctors, staff, administrators, and other patients worshipping with Jimmie. Are they not, as it were, the guardians and sustainers of this man's identity? Are they not at least the gathered community which the Mass "holds," directs, and reconstitutes—and, so being, the co-authors and co-readers of Jimmie's story as a lost-and-found sinner? Put even more theologically, was not the Christian story of death-and-life at baptism and eucharist here the ultimate "carrier" of Jimmie's identity?

Sacks rests his case on Jimmie's being "wholly held, absorbed, by a *feeling*" (my emphasis). In reflecting in contrast on William's "damnation," Sacks says: "It is not memory only which has been so altered in him, but some *ultimate capacity for feeling* which is gone; and this is the sense in which he is 'de-souled'" (my emphasis). He notes that in chapel William's wise-cracking and "confabulations" continue. Sacks seems here to have become a Schleiermacher to the neurologists, locating human salvation in configurations of feeling. But we want to ask (and this seems all too likely): What if Jimmie really doesn't have such feelings? Is he thereby deprived of both identity and salvation?

Christians who speak of "paschal identity" will wish to point to the liturgy as the place where the drama of word, offertory, Great Thanksgiving, and eucharist is enacted by and for all sinners. They will want to accord Jimmie *and William* a place in the choir, and they will not require of them that special feelings be felt. They will then point out that whatever else they don't have, these men do have *bodies*. And so when they eat of Christ's body and drink His blood, they receive *all the identity they need*, i.e., membership in the mystical body which is the company of all faithful people. ☐

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# Germans against Hitler: The Witness of the White Rose

***David Novak***

It is hard to imagine a Jew today who would come to Germany without a profound sense of uneasiness. Considering the agony of the Jewish people at the hands of the Germans from 1933 to 1945, one can well understand the attitude of many Jews today—even forty-five years after the Nazi horror has ended—who simply cannot bring themselves to set foot on German soil. Indeed, my own wife, the picture of whose grandmother and uncles murdered in Lithuania in 1941 hangs on a prominent wall in our house, could not bring herself to accompany me on my first visit to Germany in the spring of 1988. I well understood her decision and did not argue against it. Why, then, did I go?

I was invited by the White Rose Foundation in New York and its German counterpart, *Die Weisse Rose Stiftung*, to deliver one of the addresses at a conference at the University of Munich commemorating the White Rose Group and its anti-Nazi activities, a conference explicitly designed to see the legacy of this group as the basis for a new relationship between Germans and Jews. The White Rose Group was a small coterie of students (led by the brother and sister Hans and Sophie Scholl) and one of their teachers at the University of Munich who, beginning in 1942, anonymously scattered leaflets in Munich and some other German cities calling for the overthrow of the Nazi regime. Needless to say, this was an act of enormous courage, and most members of the White Rose Group were eventually caught by the Gestapo and executed. (At the end of the conference, Rabbi Arthur Green and I were privileged to recite memorial prayers at the graves of the leaders of the White Rose at Perlach Cemetery in Munich.)

I accepted this invitation because I believe that the horror of the Holocaust, if it is to have meaning for more than just its immediate victims and their immediate survivors, must be interpreted in moral terms. As my friend, Pastor Richard John Neuhaus, has so eloquently put it, "the Holocaust is in modern consciousness the icon of barbarity by contrast with which civilization is defined." This means that the evil of Nazism must be exposed as an option that can be freely chosen by anyone and that it remains, therefore, an option to be condemned. The interest in the White Rose in Germany today testifies to the fact that a large segment of the German people—especially those born after 1945—recognizes the evil of Nazism and wishes to identify with those Germans who so bravely fought it. What motivated these German anti-Nazis to resist the powerful Hitler regime is an important object lesson for more precisely locating the roots of the moral evil of Nazism by understanding the source of its antitheses (*malum privatio boni est*). Only such location of the basic choice between good and evil at this time and place can make the vow "Never Again!" assume intelligent content.

Hence, for me to refuse to go to Germany under these circumstances would be tacit assent to the assumption that the Holocaust was an eruption of such primordial, unintelligible evil that the human beings who perpetrated it were as powerless as its victims. In effect, then, any such refusal on my part would have signified my judgment that *all* those Germans born after 1945—and all those Germans who were not Nazis, let alone active anti-Nazis—have

David Novak *is a professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. He is the author of* Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification.

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nothing but Nazism upon which to continue their national existence. Thus, as one who firmly believes in Judaism's teaching of the ubiquity of moral freedom for *all* humans, I had to suppress my understandable Jewish reticence and accept this invitation.

Moreover, consistent with this moral commitment, I was anxious to meet personally the survivors of the White Rose, who were to be present in Munich for the conference. For they have something important to teach the world, and especially Jews. That might seem odd to say since Jews have rightfully presented themselves to the world as having something important to teach about suffering and victimization. Nevertheless, the choice for most Jews during the Holocaust was not strictly a moral one. They were not confronted by the choice of safety by conforming to evil or danger by resisting it. Jews were victims of the evil regime irrespective of any choice of theirs at all. The only choice for Jews at that time and place was a premoral one: to survive whenever possible.

People like those in the White Rose, on the other hand, did have an unequivocal moral choice. They exercised the moral agency that was theirs to choose good and resist evil. I was anxious to meet the surviving members of the White Rose because Jews today are no longer the absolute victims that they were in the 1930s and 1940s (thank God). As such, we have new, unaccustomed moral and political responsibilities. In the good exercise of these new responsibilities, the White Rose members are inspiring teachers for us, too.

The following is the address I delivered on May 17, 1988 in the Great Hall of the University of Munich. It was my own small attempt to capture the significance of the event. And I was most gratified after concluding my talk when an elderly German woman of impeccable anti-Nazi credentials told me she appreciated the "spiritual intent" of my talk. That remark convinced me that it was right to be there in that time and place. A Jewish soul and a German soul had connected on an occasion of far more than individual significance.

## II

To better appreciate the moral significance of Hans and Sophie Scholl and their friends in the White Rose resistance movement, I began to search my own memory for a point of connection with them and the great decision they made. Empathy can come only from within personal experience. They were university students, and I remember reading in 1957, my first year as a university student, a news report that the son of Hermann Goering had entered a cloistered monastery. He had done so, as I recall, because he could not live in the world any other way considering his name and his family heritage. This news report touched me deeply because so much of our being-in-the-world is not our own decision. We begin to discover in late adolescence the limits of our own existence and, concurrently, the moral possibilities for us within these limits. Hermann Goering's son did not choose to be Hermann Goering's son; he did not choose to be born a German in the 1930s. What he did choose, however, was to make his own life in a place where everyone assumes a new name, in a place not of Germany or even of this world.

Indeed, the Talmud recognizes that such a radical existential decision is possible, that morally we can transcend our historical world. This recognition is made by a great rabbi who pondered the seeming injustice of the Scriptural curse that God "punishes the sons for the sin of the fathers" (Exodus 20:5). The rabbi resolved this problem by concluding that this is only so "when they themselves hang onto their fathers' deeds." Conversely, it is not so "when they do not hang onto their fathers' deeds." (Babylonian Talmud: Berakhot 7a). Hermann Goering's son chose *not* to hang onto the legacy of his father's monstrous deeds by effectively removing himself from the political world to dwell in a contemplative world. His choice was admirable, but only imitable by a very few persons. Still, I have always hoped that God blessed him for this and enabled him to sanctify his life through his choice.

Hans and Sophie Scholl, like Goering's son, believed they too had to transcend their political world. They too made a fateful choice. In some ways, they made an easier choice than Goering's son did; in other ways, though, theirs was harder. It was an easier choice because their own father was an inspiring moral example, not a moral degenerate like Hermann Goering. Their father warned them about the Nazi evil at the very beginning of the new regime, and at their trial their father bravely cried out, "There is a higher court before which we all must stand!" Their revolt against the authority of their fatherland at that time was not a revolt against fatherhood, but rather a confirmation of their own family legacy. Yet, theirs was a harder choice for, unlike Goering's son, they did not remove themselves from the political world, but threw themselves into that world and were, in the end, consumed by it.

What enabled the Scholls, and their friends with them, to do what they did? What enabled them not to hang onto the deeds of the evil regime under which they lived? In asking such questions, we must distinguish between historical interest and moral interest. Historical interest can be the result of mere curiosity, and curiosity looks for the particular, the unique. This interest, then, could be to discover what made the Scholls so different from ourselves. Moral interest, on the other hand, is the result of our desire to find what human beings have in common and what is to be done to enable that commonality to be extended from the present into the future. Moral interest in the Scholls and their friends in the White Rose should be for the sake of what we can learn from them about

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how we are to act in the face of evil, when our own fatherlands can no longer be trusted as safe dwellings for our souls. Moral interest looks for models to imitate. Clearly, the Scholls and their friends meant themselves to be morally significant for others, even beyond their own time and place. To look at their lives and work from any other perspective than that of moral interest, therefore, is to trivialize their lives and their deaths.

In carefully studying the White Rose leaflets, as well as the moving account of this movement by a surviving Scholl sibling, Inge (*The White Rose: Munich 1942-43,* 2nd ed., trans. Arthur R. Schultz), a number of important moral points emerged for me.

First, the Scholls' resistance to the Nazi regime began in their discovery and affirmation that the human person is not made by or for the state, but that the state is made by human persons for the fulfillment of human nature. In their very first leaflet, the Scholls quoted Schiller's essay, "The Lawgiving of Lycurgus and Solon." Schiller saw the Spartan king, Lycurgus, as an archetype of tyranny, and the White Rose saw him, as mediated by Schiller, to be a forerunner of the totalitarianism of Hitler. According to Schiller, Lycurgus' chief sin was to deny that "the state is never an end in itself (*Der Staat selbst ist niemals Zweck*); it is important only as a condition under which the purpose of mankind can be attained, and this purpose is none other than the development of all man's powers, his progress and improvement." (All quotations are from Inge Scholl, *The White Rose.*)

The inversion in Nazi legality of the true relationship between the human person and the state was such that "the foundation of natural law and morality were destroyed by that law." The Nazis were, for the White Rose, the successors of Lycurgus. This point is demonstrated in the death sentence pronounced on the White Rose member, Christoph Probst, by the infamous Nazi judge, Roland Freisler, who said, "He is a 'nonpolitical man'—hence no man at all!" The Scholls and their friends clearly saw that their humanness came from another source, that it could not be destroyed even by the death sentence of a Nazi court.

Second, it is essential to keep in mind the source of that humanness which transcends the power of the state. Some might see it as merely a stubborn form of individualism. Indeed, Inge Scholl's memoir seems to identify the beginning of Hans' opposition to the Nazi regime in just that way: "Day and night the talk was about *Treue*—loyalty. But what was the foundation of *Treue,* after all, but being true to oneself?" (It is ironic to recall that the famous line of Shakespeare which surely influenced this statement—"This above all: to thine own self be true" [Hamlet, 1.3]—is uttered by Polonius, a rather pompous old man, to his adolescent son, Laertes, a boy who hardly had that much of a "self" to which yet to be true.) But Hans and Sophie Scholl saw that faithfulness to self in a decidedly nonindividualistic way. Here it is especially illuminating to read of their discovery of their Christian heritage, Scripture of course, but most importantly, Augustine—Augustine who so clearly delineated between the City of God and the City of Man. It was Augustine's prayer that so inspired Sophie in her purpose: "Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it reposes in Thee."

What the White Rose emphasized was not the protest of isolated individuals but rather the protest of persons whose relationship with God and sacred community is always prior to their relationship with the state. It is this that provides a transcendent basis for judging the demands of the state. For individualism, without such a grounding in a higher relationship, can just as easily be the basis of a criminal's resistance to a lawful regime as it can be the basis of the resistance of a moral hero to a criminal regime. The first White Rose leaflet established the roots of individual opposition in communal grounds: "Therefore, every individual, conscious of his responsibility as a member of Christian and Western civilization, must defend himself as best he can at this late hour, he must work against the scourges of mankind . . . forestall the spread of this atheistic war machine before it is too late, . . ."

The "individualism" advocated by the White Rose was not a romantic declaration of self-creation. It saw itself as part of a larger civilization, one that transcended the absolute Germanness proclaimed by Hitler, and it saw that wider civilization in terms of the ultimate relationship with God. The humanism of the White Rose, then, was a humanism based on Christian faith. As the fourth leaflet put it, "Man is free, to be sure, but without the true God he is defenseless against the principle of evil."

It was only this faith of the White Rose resisters that distinguished them from anarchists. For anarchists see all governed societies as evil and, hence, leave themselves open to the power of any society—since governed society is inevitable in human existence. Anarchy gives us no standard at all to judge between the inevitable historical situation of better and worse societies. Thus, one should not see the White Rose resistance as a restatement of the *anomie* so prevalent in the Weimar Republic. The civilization to which the White Rose called Germans to return much predated Weimar.

Third, it was the tradition of Christian humanism which led the White Rose to see the essence of the anti-humanism of the Nazis in their disregard for the sanctity of individual human life. Thus, even though Nazi anti-Semitism was essential to the party's whole project from the very start, the desensitization to the lives of the Jews made manifest in the Final Solution was preceded by desensitization to the lives of those far easier to categorize as subhuman (*Untermenschen*)—the mentally retarded and the psychotic. In

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looking for sources of inspiration for the White Rose, Inge Scholl quotes at length the protests from the 1942 sermons of Count Galen, Bishop of Muenster, who forcefully spoke out against the Nazi death sentence for "life which does not deserve to live" (*Unwertes-leben*). The bishop saw what many Germans were led not to see. The Nazi program could be made to seem justifiable, even humane, if presented as the elimination of lives not on the basis that they were of no use to anyone else (though that was clearly the Nazi view of the matter) but on the basis that they were of no use *to themselves*. In that view of things, the killing of "defectives" took on the guise of putting a merciful end to lives that were only a pointless misery to those enduring them. Bishop Galen saw through the rationalization and so did the members of the White Rose.

Fourth, this concern with the sanctity of human life *per se* was at the heart of the White Rose protest against the murder of the Jews. As their second leaflet put it, "We do not want to discuss here the question of the Jews (*die Judenfrage*), nor do we want in this leaflet to compose a defense or apology. . . . Jews, too, are human beings (*Auch die Juden sind doch Menschen*)—no matter what position we take with respect to the Jewish question. . . ."

I must admit that this particular statement is rather troubling, certainly to a Jewish reader. When the White Rose was so unequivocal in its condemnation of Nazi atheism, Nazi totalitarianism, and Nazi euthanasia, why was it so equivocal in its stand against Nazi anti-Semitism? Although the Nazis ultimately intended the destruction of a far larger segment of humankind than just the Jews, their murder of Jews was precisely because they were Jews, not undifferentiated "human beings."

In all fairness to the members of the White Rose, their position may have seemed strategically necessary at the time. After all, by 1942 the deportations to the death camps in the east were already fully underway. Jews had been so removed from ordinary human contact with Germans that their simple humanity had to be reaffirmed before the question of their particular social-political status could be addressed. Perhaps the White Rose, in the limited space available in their leaflets, could do no more than raise the basic point that the Nazi policy of extermination of the Jews was of a different kind altogether from the earlier anti-Semitism, which for all its enormities would never have suggested that the solution to the so-called "Jewish problem in Europe" should be mass murder.

But this is an historical explanation, not a moral one, and the position of the White Rose on the Jewish question needs a moral analysis and critique. The White Rose leaflets do not deal with the fact that without an already existent reservoir of anti-Semitism among Europeans in general and Germans in particular, Nazi ideology could never have been able to establish a policy of genocide against the Jews. The young members of the White Rose seemed to be as yet unable to deal with this moral dilemma. Perhaps it is too much to expect them to have morally transcended their society and their culture in a fully consistent way. But the questions they avoided remain vital questions for those who would identify with them morally. A fully satisfactory expression of the religious humanism that inspired the White Rose must directly confront the issue of anti-Semitism.

To speak as the White Rose did of humanity *per se* is to remain at the level of abstraction. The German people under Hitler were not so much desensitized to the simple humanity of the Jews as they were oversensitized to presumed traits in them that seemed to make the assumption of a common humanity impossible. The Nazis did everything they could to emphasize those things about Jews that made them appear different from Germans, that allowed them to be placed, indeed, in the category of the subhuman.

The designation of Jews as "the other" lay at the heart of National Socialist doctrine. This is a point emphasized by the Catholic philosopher, Jacques Maritain, writing in 1942 in America as an exile from his native France, then under Nazi occupation. (Note that these words were written at the same time as the appearance of the White Rose leaflets.) "Nor in the racial type of community . . . is there an object, a common task to perform. . . . It is not for an objective purpose that they assemble, but rather for the subjective pleasure of marching together (*zusammen-marchieren*). . . . Because [the community] is not defined by a work to be done, it will only be able to define itself by its opposition to other human groups. Therefore, it will have essential need of an *enemy against whom* it will build itself; it is by recognizing and hating its enemies that the political body will find its own common consciousness."

Maritain understood that the Nazi project required the fabrication of enemies. Hate was its very *elan*, and that is why, as events soon made clear, the regime was more devoted to the death of others than to saving the lives of its own people. The Nazi philosophy was made manifest more clearly in Auschwitz than on either the eastern or the western fronts. The members of the White Rose, like Maritain, saw the radical nihilism at the heart of the Nazi project. But they did not see that this nihilism stemmed from the Nazis' radical hatred of the Jews. The so-called "Jewish question" cannot, therefore, be bracketed in our moral interest in the significance of the White Rose.

The last point that emerges from the White Rose leaflets and the story of their authors is that these were Germans who loved their fatherland. They were Germans who, despite the evil of the current regime and its considerable support in the population, still believed that Germany's honor was redeemable. They

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believed that Nazism was not the only version of Germanness (*Deutschtum*). There was, they insisted, another German tradition to be tapped, a tradition of European humanism. It is significant that the most important immediate source of living inspiration for the White Rose were the radio broadcasts of the exiled German author and Nobel laureate, Thomas Mann. Mann's pure German must have been a source for the White Rose's contempt for the German of Hitler, whose *Mein Kampf* is, in the words of a White Rose writer, "written in the worst German I have ever read." This is much more than a literary criticism. It signifies the White Rose's recognition that the degeneration of a culture is immediately manifest in the degeneration of its language.

Not only did Thomas Mann help inspire the White Rose movement, he was himself inspired by it. Thus on June 27, 1943, referring to the Munich students, he spoke to his German listeners over the clandestine radio station as follows:

> I say to you: Respect the peoples of Europe! Let me add, though at the moment it may sound strange to many of you who are listening, pay respect to the German people and show sympathy with them! The idea that it is impossible to distinguish between the German *Volk* and Nazism—that to be German and National Socialist are one and the same thing . . . is untenable and will not prevail.

This is an important part of the moral legacy of the White Rose. Indeed, without it the German people would be forever oppressed by the crushing burden of the Nazi past. It is in understanding of this point that major Jewish thinkers such as Leo Baeck and Martin Buber came back to Germany after the war to engage in dialogue with the German people. Many Jews were highly indignant that they did so. However, in our Jewish tradition, the possibility of return—*teshuvah*—turning away from evil to come back to a more primordial source of good, cannot be denied to any person or to any people on earth. The full moral appreciation of the White Rose is, therefore, a significant part of this process of return to a more primordial source of German good. The White Rose was not an idiosyncratic phenomenon, but instead represented another, better, Germanness. Just as Hitler was a failure in his attempt to destroy the body of the Jewish people, the White Rose, and the moral interest of many Germans today in it, will hopefully show that Hitler also failed to destroy the soul of the German people.

May in that way the memory of the White Rose be a blessing for both Jews and Germans today. FT


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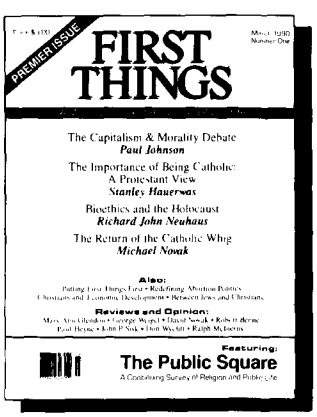


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# Books In Review

## Discerning . . . to a Point

The Giving and Taking of Life: Essays Ethical. By James Tunstead Burtchaell. *University of Notre Dame Press. 324 pp. $29.95.*

***Reviewed by*** **Gilbert Meilaender**

A powerful truth, pressed too far, may finally mislead. That, or something like it, seems to me the right way to describe this book. The essays gathered in this volume are insightful and passionate, and Burtchaell writes with an eloquence that is all too rare. But the systematic underlying thesis—which must be distinguished from the many individual insights—finally does not persuade.

The reader will find here essays discussing the way in which moral issues ought to be decided within the Church (and lengthy discussions of several examples from Roman Catholic history), early Christian views on abortion, Christian attitudes toward marriage and children, and the role of believers in public life. Along with such classical topics, the reader will also find essays dealing with a variety of recent concerns: terrorism, liberation theology, the use of tissue from aborted fetuses for research purposes. On any of these questions one can learn a great deal from Burtchaell, and on some of them—e.g., marriage, the ethos of the early church—his insights are clearly the fruit of years of reflection.

I will, however, focus attention not on the varied insights but on the central argument that runs throughout. This argument makes a claim with respect to both the method and the norm of moral argument. Normatively, Burtchaell contends that an act is good or bad because of what it does to us, how it affects and shapes our character. Methodologically, he contends that the normative judgments reached by the church are "discernments" made by the entire believing community rather than "decisions" imposed by those in positions of special authority. The believing community has a long enough memory to understand what actions do to us over time.

Obviously, the claim about method is directed most immediately to Burtchaell's fellow pilgrims within the body of Roman Catholicism, and I would not presume to instruct them about what that body does or does not need. He argues that there is a variety of special roles within the believing community: the cleric (who convenes and presides over the community, guiding it toward discernment); the scholar (who undertakes constructive reflection on behalf of the community); and the prophet (who challenges and extends the church's vision). Each of these roles is essential for moral discernment within the community, but none has trump and none can pull rank. Finally, it is always the community itself that is in the process of learning to discern moral truth: "the title to ownership of the tradition is communal, never private." Burtchaell illustrates this process of discernment, and the snags it may encounter, through lengthy discussion of three examples: the gradual development of the concept of a "saint"; the slow process by which the Knights of Labor came to be accepted by the Roman Church, despite the Knights' commitment to secrecy and ritual; and the controversy in recent decades surrounding birth control.

In each of these examples Burtchaell seems to favor the insights of the laity as well as "pastoral" rather than "authoritarian" approaches from the church hierarchy. How far down that road he wishes to go—what he would make, for example, of opinion polls that suggest that many members of the believing community hold more permissive views than he does on abortion—I do not know. But the problem with arguments based on communal discernment is that each age adds its own chapter to the community's memory bank and thereby changes the whole. For example, Burtchaell clearly believes that the community (if not its hierarchy) has rightly begun to see that sex without babies—contraception—is sometimes a good thing. But he may be less pleased if its corollary turns out to be what we are now beginning to witness: babies without sex, and the desire for a perfect baby.

The kind of story of communal discernment that Burtchaell wishes to tell is inherently open-ended; yet there are issues he does not want to leave open. Moreover, if this gradual process of discernment is not actively shaped by authoritative teaching and teachers, it will be subject to more spirits than the one termed "Holy" by Christians. It will be shaped in large measure by the surrounding cultural context.

The memory bank of the believing community has countless options within it, and it is hard to say how or why any one of them should be privileged. Perhaps the Pope who did not take the advice of his own commissioners on the subject of contraception had a clearer grasp than they did of the central thread in the community's memory. I am not certain how one decides or whether Burtchaell's method helps us decide. What I am certain of, however, is that a serious dose of the "believing community" in some of its Protestant versions might make Burtchaell less sanguine. In part, of course, this is simply an old story: Catholics think a church without a heavy-handed magisterium looks alluring; Protestants think a church with some semblance of order and authority would be positively refreshing. But the more serious point is this: If there is a process of discernment that is important in the life of the

Gilbert Meilaender *is Professor of Religion at Oberlin College and the author of* The Limits of Love.

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church, may there not also be a time for authoritative decision? A time for participation but also a time for obedience?

In all of C. S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia my favorite character is the dwarf Trumpkin. In *Prince Caspian,* when he and the children are trying to decide on a course of action, Trumpkin's view is overruled by the High King Peter. And Trumpkin then, in turn, agrees to undertake a mission in which he does not believe and against which he has advised. He does so simply because the High King commands. "You are my King. I know the difference between giving advice and taking orders. You've had my advice, and now it's the time for orders." If Burtchaell's vision of the slow process of discernment within the community has its appeal, so does Trumpkin's willingness to bend the knee, even to human authority. He is far from docile—but he is obedient.

STILL more interesting is Burtchaell's normative claim: the good is that which causes us to flourish; the bad that which causes us to wither. He illustrates the substance of this argument by suggesting how the earliest church accepted and then expanded upon a fourfold moral commitment that it found in Judaism. In Judaism there was the commitment to care for the widow . . . extended by the church to prohibit a husband from divorcing his wife. In Judaism there was a commitment to care for the pauper . . . extended by the church to care for the slave and, eventually, to erode the moral basis of slavery. In Judaism there was a commitment to care for the stranger . . . extended by the church in its requirement of love for the enemy. In Judaism there was a commitment to care for the orphan . . . extended by the church to include the infant, whether newborn or unborn.

Burtchaell carries the argument still further, suggesting that out of these commitments have grown four movements integrally related to each other: (1) for equality of men and women; (2) for relief from bondage—whether of poverty or racial subjection; (3) for world peace; and (4) for the rescue of children from abortion, infanticide, and abuse. This is, in effect, Burtchaell's own version of a consistent ethic of life, since he contends that these must be held together. "Christians, possibly more than others, should immediately recognize that these various struggles are in alliance with each other. None can be pitted against another." In part, this is his attempt to demonstrate how integral to the Christian moral vision is opposition to abortion—that such opposition is "no primitive and narrow dogma that a more sophisticated church has now outgrown."

Nevertheless, like all such attempts at a consistent ethic of life, it overlooks important features of morality. It implies, for example, that opposition to abortion cannot be consistent apart from opposition to war (pacifism). But the very same love that moves one to try to protect a helpless fetus might lead one to defend an equally helpless fellow citizen. We need to recognize that love may sometimes have to take on an "alien" form in order to serve the needs of the weak and helpless.

If Burtchaell does not see that, it is because his moral vision does not, in fact, place the needs of the weak and helpless at its center. Pride of place goes to the agent's moral flourishing. What our action does to others is specifically termed "secondary." "Our primary moral concern must be: How do certain courses of behavior tend to make us thrive or induce us to wither . . . personally, spiritually, in our character, our self?"

THERE is considerable moral wisdom in Burtchaell's claim. If we are unable to see his point, we may never be able to say "no" to any action that promises to serve human wellbeing. We will become nothing but utilitarian calculators of consequences, or, put more religiously, we will sell our souls in the name of serving others. But our souls belong to God—that is why we ought not sell them for good results. And the problem with Burtchaell's formulation is that it too readily suggests that our souls belong to ourselves—that what counts is simply our flourishing. But we flourish when we learn to be *obedient* to the will of God, and, we may recall, that is a theme Burtchaell does not like to sound.

Because he does not, Burtchaell's claims sometime seem—to me at least—to lack persuasive force. He fails to see how hidden may be the rewards of virtue. Christian ethics will always suffer from the tension between two principles: loving service to those in need, *and* obedience to God (which may mean that some forms of "service" are forbidden even when they might relieve need). But Burtchaell bypasses each of these and places the flourishing of the self at the heart of his thinking. He often writes as if the statement "a good man cannot be harmed" were not a paradox, as if it were obvious for all to see. I am ready to affirm with him that we can flourish as moral beings only when we act virtuously . . . as long as he is willing to say much more clearly than he does that this flourishing may often be hidden entirely under the cross, visible only to faith and not to sight.

Lacking such an affirmation, Burtchaell's assertions are bound to seem unconvincing at times. Consider, for example, the following:

> How does the community evaluate any kind of act as good or evil? By seeing what that action does to us. The gospel, for instance, cues us about wealth: wealth carries a high risk. Taking the tip, the community takes a long look at the affluent and develops an even more trenchant and shareable conviction that few of us are strong enough to survive wealth. The same with marijuana, dictatorship, red-lining, slavery, embezzlement, and child abuse. If we share or if we dispute the

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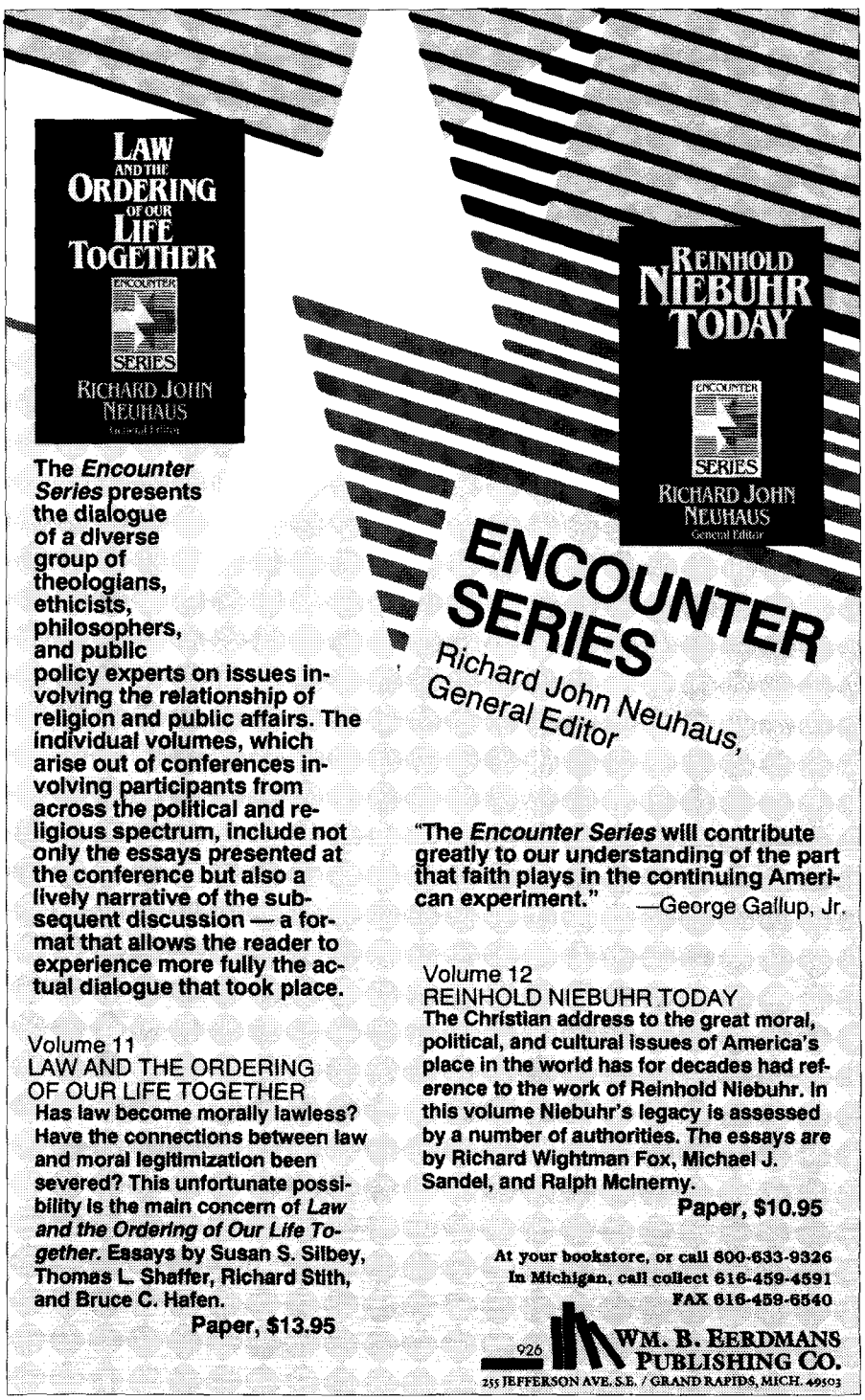
> received ethical assessments of such activities, it is primarily because of our own moral appraisal of what they do to people; most of all, to those who engage in them.

That such activities harm the character of their perpetrators I shall not dispute, and Burtchaell's argument is therefore to be taken seriously. But I find myself unable to suppose that we learn best whether it is wrong to bake an infant in an oven by considering whether such action causes the flourishing or the withering of the one who does it. Whatever we may say of morality in general, we certainly miss what is central in Christian love if we place our own self-realization at the heart of the moral life, as Burtchaell does.

This feature of his ethic leads Burtchaell to suggest that women who abort their fetuses are themselves the true victims. And, again, his claim is not without an important element of truth. But it ceases to persuade when pressed in the way Burtchaell does. He gathers together in one paragraph as examples of victimizers who are actually victims drug dealers, rapists, pathological prison guards, and women who procure abortions. In the next sentence these women are described as "desperate or autistic." There is a sense in which, from the perspective of eternity, his claim is accurate. It is the sense in which *any* sin, embraced with a whole heart, sets our foot on the path to the never-ending autism which Christians call hell. Along the way, however, to an eternal destination our loves are usually divided, and we seldom embrace either good or evil with a whole heart. Perhaps some women who seek abortions are moved simply by anger that another life should seem to limit their own. But others may be trying to affirm something good—their hopes and dreams for their life—while choosing a wrong means to that good end. They should not be compared to rapists or described as autistic. They should not even, in the first instance, be told that they will wither if they kill their fetus. Such language can only accentuate their attempts to make themselves secure. Rather, they should be told that, by God's grace, they *are* eternally secure. Cared for, they are free to care for others. Thus, the problem with Burtchaell's characterizations is not only that they are demeaning; it is that they direct attention to the already insecure self rather than to the God who loves that needy self, and to the neighbor whom we are called to love.

At this point, in a discussion of one of Burtchaell's particular claims, his larger thematic concerns about norm and method in moral argument intersect. He believes, I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think, that if we show how moral claims are connected to our own flourishing—if we do this rather than issuing *obiter dicta* (or, even, oracles from the Lord)—we will encourage discernment more acceptable to people than simple acceptance of authoritative decisions. I do not wish to underestimate what he is attempting; it is always good to try to make sense of the moral life, see its point and understand its connections. But the irony is that this method may prove far less persuasive than Burtchaell hopes. His claims about women who seek abortions do not, for example, persuade. At least they have not worked at all on the students before whom I have placed them. Perhaps a different norm, which placed the neighbor's flourishing rather than my own at the center, and a different method, which made place for obedience to authority, might work as well or better.

But apart from such strategic issues, we have not fully understood the moral life—and certainly have not fully comprehended Christian moral vision—until we put the cross at its center, until we realize that virtue may not always seem to lead to flourishing. Burtchaell may be right to suggest that flourishing also has its part and that something is wrong if we fail to see this. But such failure is as nothing compared with the failure of a morality that could make no place for the nobility of Trumpkin.

## Where's the Glory?

MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY: A JOURNEY INTO THE EVANGELICAL SUBCULTURE. By RANDALL BALMER. *Oxford University Press. 246 pp. $19.95.*

***Reviewed by*** **Craig M. Gay**

WHILE familiarity and education both breed contempt for things like traditional religion, they also, especially in combination, can spawn interesting insights into traditional religious life. Randall Balmer's study of the American evangelical subculture, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory,* provides a case in point. Balmer, a teacher of American religious history at Columbia who in his own words "grew up fundamentalist," has produced a description of popular American evangelicalism that is at once skeptical and yet full of keen perceptions.

The idea behind *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory* was simply for Balmer to travel around America and examine by way of interview "popular" evangelicalism (as opposed to that expressed by official evangelical leaders or media representatives). The book is a kind of American "travelogue" in the tradition of Tocqueville and Steinbeck. There was a particular need for this, Balmer felt, in that recent media coverage, by relying upon shopworn stereotypes created by the likes of Sinclair Lewis and H. L. Mencken and by focusing exclusively upon the more spectacular expressions of American evangelicalism, had consistently failed to understand the movement. As he puts it, "I wanted to show variations within a subculture generally regarded as monolithic." At another level, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory* reflects Balmer's attempts to come to grips with the meaning of his own fundamentalist past and to identify "those kernels of truth and insight into the human condition" that he suspects are embedded within the evangelical message but that have become distorted by consumerism and other corrosive elements of American culture.

Balmer makes a great many stops in his tour of American evangelicalism. He begins with with a visit to Chuck Smith's Calvary Chapel in Santa Ana, one of Southern California's famed "megachurches." He is interested to see if "routinization" has begun to set in at Calvary Chapel after almost two decades of explosive growth that began in the Jesus movement of the 1970s. While Calvary Chapel has continued to thrive, Balmer does find its evangelistic outreach somewhat bereft of charisma. Balmer next visits Dallas Theological Seminary to inspect what he suggests are the "twin pillars" of American evangelicalism's theological infrastructure: biblical inerrancy and premillenial dispensationalism. Finding the two rigidly intact, Balmer also finds Dallas students and faculty exhibiting residual tendencies toward sexism. After leaving Dallas, Balmer spends several days "on location" with evangelical filmmaker Donald Thompson. Thompson has earned a national reputation for his movies depicting life on earth during the apocalypse. Popular stereotypes that emphasize the bizarre nature of the evangelical world will not be dispelled by Balmer's subsequent description of a visit with faith-healer Neal Frisby at Phoenix's Capstone Cathedral.

PERHAPS the greatest fear that haunts evangelical parents, Balmer says, is that their children will not come to believe as they do. To see how evangelicalism is passed from one generation to the next, Balmer observes a week-long program for adolescents at Word of Life Island in the Adirondacks. He concludes that the engineering of spiritual consent may simply not be able to overcome the forces of routinization. Next, Balmer campaigns with evangelicals during the 1988 presidential election and observes their support of candidates Kemp and Robertson and their opposition to abortion-on-demand. Perhaps evangelicals have taken up the issue of abortion, Balmer suggests, because they "identify with the vulnerability of the fetus, its susceptibility to larger, alien forces outside the womb." Balmer then reports quite favorably on the efforts of John Perkins' Voice of Calvary Fellowship to alleviate the effects of poverty and racial discrimination in Jackson, Mississippi. From there, Balmer travels to the Christian Booksellers

CRAIG M. GAY *is a post-doctoral fellow and sessional lecturer at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia.*

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Association's annual convention, where, depending on how you look at it, evangelical commercialism may be observed at its best or worst.

A subsequent visit with Father Innocent Good House, rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Fort Yates, North Dakota, leads Balmer to reflect that there are a number of affinities between Christianity and Native American religions. What a shame, then, that Christian missionaries have tended to believe that conversion necessitated the destruction of Native American religion and culture. From North Dakota Balmer travels to Camp Freedom in St. Petersburg, Florida, where he detects "precious little assurance beneath the fragile veneer of confidence."

Balmer's final stop is back on the West coast, at the Oregon Extension of Trinity College in Lincoln, Oregon. Balmer was once a student at the Oregon Extension and has a good friend in one of the founders of this alternative education program for evangelical college students, Douglas Frank. By directing his students through an intensive course in social criticism and neo-orthodox theology, Frank wants to make them see that the evangelical subculture is based, as he puts it, "upon lies and denials," and that it has become blinded by moralism to the real gospel of Jesus Christ. The episode ends with Frank laughing introspectively about American evangelicalism: "We are sorry bastards. Lord, have mercy."

Balmer says that he does not yet know just what his tour of American evangelicalism actually means, but he confesses to sympathizing with Frank's assessment. The evangelical subculture, Balmer argues, is just a "socially constructed reality," one that is "illusory and incongruous with the larger world." The distinctions evangelicals make between the "church" and the "world," between the "saved" and the "damned," and ultimately between good and evil are simply reflections of their disappointment with the direction American culture has taken since the end of the last century. Still, the evangelical subculture persists, Balmer reasons, because of its timeless appeal. "It offers eternal life," he writes, "and nothing frightens us mortals more than death."

*Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory* is a wonderful source of Americana, and Balmer writes of what he sees with clarity and humor. In addition, each of Balmer's contemporary vignettes contains useful bits of historical background, enabling us to put his observations in a larger context. While the reader may wonder how effectively the book will serve to dispel the stereotypical view of American evangelicalism, at the very least it illustrates the diversity of the movement and so should serve to calm those who worry that evangelicals stand poised to reconquer American culture. One wonders, though, if it is possible to understand the subcultural "reaction" of American evangelicals without some discussion of what, culturally speaking, they have been reacting against. In suggesting that the evangelical subculture is simply a socially constructed reality, does Balmer mean to imply that the "larger world"—the world, presumably, of academia and the cultural elite—is not so constructed?

Evangelical intellectuals, or at least those intellectuals who have narrowly escaped the evangelical orbit, have become increasingly embarrassed in recent decades by the culture of conservative Protestantism. As a result, a kind of reflexive evangelical criticism of evangelicalism has become something of a genre within the movement. At first this criticism was limited to fundamentalism's conservative culture and its conservative political leanings; but the criticism has gradually, one is tempted to say inexorably, been extended to include conservative Protestant theology as well. Balmer's chief theological argument with evangelicalism, for example, appears to be not simply that it makes the wrong kinds of distinctions between itself and the world, between the sacred and the secular, but that evangelicals continue to insist upon distinguishing between good and evil at all. No small wonder, then, that there is a kind of sadness that pervades *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*. Not only has Balmer failed to see glory in the subculture of American evangelicalism, he appears to be doubtful about our ability even to say what glory is. Along with his mentor Douglas Frank, he is left able to say only what it is not.

## The Bad Old Days

Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts about the Sixties. By Peter Collier and David Horowitz. *Summit Books. 352 pp. $19.95.*

***Reviewed by*** **Paul Hollander**

The retroactive glorification of the 1960s has been gathering momentum over the last decade. It reflects and in turn reenforces what has become the conventional wisdom of a significant segment of public opinion, especially in the intellectual and academic communities. The 1960s has come to be perceived in such circles as a period of beneficial social change marked by an unprecedented outburst of

Paul Hollander *is Professor of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and the author of* Political Pilgrims.

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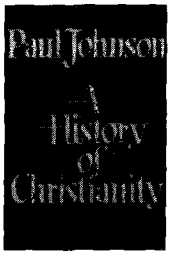


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idealism among the young. Thanks largely to their efforts, the anti-war, civil rights, feminist, environmental, and anti-nuclear movements flourished. There were, it is granted, some "excesses" on the fringes of the protest movement, such as the violent activities of the Weathermen, that marred an otherwise glorious chapter of American history. But even these excesses were the fault not so much of the protestors as of an unjust and unresponsive social system that provoked extreme reactions to it. Not much blame attaches to the young. Or as the authors of this volume put it: "Nostalgia artists have made [the sixties] into a . . . prelapsarian age of good sex, good drugs, and good vibes . . . a time of monumental idealism . . . a time of commitment and action when dewy-eyed young people in the throes of moral passion unknown in our own selfish age sought only to remake the world."

Peter Collier and David Horowitz present in *Destructive Generation* a wholly different portrait of the decade. They identify among its characteristics the rise of political extremism, a revival of a no-enemies-on-the-left mentality, and an outburst of uncritical admiration for and identification with left-wing totalitarian systems such as Cuba, China, and Vietnam, whose repressive regimes were invariably depicted as victims of western (especially American) capitalism. Other marks of the decade include a pervasive anti-intellectualism that inflicted lasting damage on the nation's universities and a general loosening of social discipline and moral standards that encouraged hedonism under the banner of "self-realization."

*Destructive Generation* has elicited a remarkable amount of hostility. The best explanation for this visceral animosity may well lie in the common tendency to idealize one's youth. Most of the hostile reviewers of *Destructive Generation* were young during the 1960s; many were actively involved with the movements and ideas of the times. Thus an attack on those ideals and movements becomes an attack on the reviewers' earlier selves, on their personal and political identities. Collier and Horowitz were themselves leading figures among the '60s' activists and idealists, and their rejection of the past can only be seen as a sell-out and act of betrayal. Most reviewers scornfully label them as turn-coats, unhinged ideologues who switched from one set of rigidly held beliefs to another. Particularly unforgivable to their critics (and often mentioned in the damning reviews) was the authors' strong support of the Reagan administration.

ONE can find historical precedent for today's ventures in "second thoughts" in the disillusioned soul-searchings of an earlier generation of leftist radicals—the former Communists and fellow-travellers of the Stalin era. It is instructive to reflect on the differences involved in the two generations and in the reactions their recantations have evoked.

Disillusionment with Soviet Communism was a massive phenomenon that greatly exceeded the corresponding disenchantment with the radicalism of the 1960s. The earlier disillusionment gathered weight as it stretched over several decades, beginning with the purges of the 1930s and extending, at different rates among different individuals, all the way up to the crushing of the Hungarian uprising and to Khruschev's "secret speech" in the 1950s.

Liberal public opinion found it easier to accept the defections from the pro-Soviet cause than from the radical movement of the '60s. One reason lay in the difference between the nature of the two types of attachments. Pro-Soviet fellow travelling and association with the American Communist Party was in the main a personally more isolated and isolating experience than participation in the '60s' movement. Moreover those earlier loyalties had an identifiably alien focus: they involved identification with a foreign power that manipulated American citizens in its own interests. The attachments and movements of the '60s, by contrast, were entirely homegrown, and they represented a mass phenomenon that was far from exclusively political. The ties that continue to bind people to the '60s have been more diffuse than were the pro-Communist causes of the earlier period. Those ties persist not only because of their partly apolitical character but because they involve large numbers of people who have been able to find safe haven in supportive institutional settings on many campuses and in many churches.

Thus the ethos of the sixties lives on in an extensive and solidly based adversary culture, one whose beliefs, in distinction to those of the earlier generation, are unlikely to wither or wilt. Group solidarity restrains any massive defection, or even significant soul-searching and reappraisal. Enough people persist in the New Left faith to discourage widespread "second thoughts" which in any case would entail the kind of painful reassessment of fundamental beliefs that most people instinctively avoid.

It is therefore the case that a great many people who became estranged from and hostile to America in the '60s and '70s retained that disposition through the '80s. While many of the specific movements and causes of the '60s have vanished, a basic suspicion or aversion toward American institutions persists. Indeed, the conviction that "America was guilty and untrustworthy . . . is perhaps the most enduring legacy of the sixties." Given all this, it is easy to understand why those willing vocally and publicly to defend these devalued institutions—such as the authors of this book—inspire so much hostility.

Collier and Horowitz recognize that the sixties' nostalgia has more than sentimental implications: "the nostalgia is also a political phenomenon. The growing interest in the sixties coincides with a renaissance of the radicalism that

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was the decade's dominant trait . . . ." The authors pinpoint the specific ways in which that radicalism survives and influences the present. They even suggest that the American political spectrum on the whole did not move to the right despite the Reagan presidencies; they note that many of the values of the '60s became, in somewhat diluted form, the conventional wisdom of the '70s and '80s.

As part of their argument, Collier and Horowitz direct attention to an often overlooked political development, the revival and rehabilitation of the Old Left, a development accompanied by a renewed spirit of anti-anti-Communism. Memories of McCarthyism have played a major part in this process, with both its real and alleged victims "rehabilitated as martyrs and heroes of an American political 'nightmare.'" In the aftermath of Vietnam and Watergate, and the collective guilt they both inspired, "the specter of 'McCarthyism' was embraced as a metaphor for a guilty past to which America must never return." Indeed, it became a "political blunt instrument to beat critics of Leftism into silence" and to discredit any form of anti-Communism.

Anti-anti-Communism has further been sustained, the authors argue, by a revival of the thirties' tactic of "popular frontism." Memories of that tactic came naturally to those many members of the sixties' radical leadership who were "red diaper babies," children of Old Left radicals of the thirties and forties. (Horowitz was himself among them.)

The survival of the sixties in the present has found consequential, if sometimes bizarre, expression in municipal politics. A number of cities that contain large universities have found their governments influenced in varying degrees by university-based activists, many of them sixties' radicals now safely tenured faculty members. Among these enclaves—which include Berkeley and Santa Cruz, Madison, Ann Arbor, Burlington, and Amherst—Berkeley has been the most extreme. The book's chapter on Berkeley ("A Tale of Socialism in One City") details developments largely unknown to the American public. It should be required reading for anybody interested in the survival and institutionalization of the sixties. The case of "the People's Republic of Berkeley" provides a graphic illustration of what happens when the rhetoric of the '60s gets implemented in the "real world."

Run by radicals for approximately twenty years, Berkeley has experienced the virtual ruin of its public school system, a vastly increased municipal bureaucracy, a greatly diminished housing stock (thanks to stringent rent controls and other restrictions on property rights), increased crime and drug abuse, widespread corruption, and wholesale waste of public funds. While disgruntled residents complain of potholes in the roads, the leaders of the city undertake diplomatic missions abroad. Their domestic achievements include the establishment of a special park in which unleashed dogs were expected to "exist harmoniously once separated from their owners' ethic of possessiveness." But things went badly. As one chastened promoter of the scheme put it, "Some people were sure that the dogs would prove to be egalitarians. . . . But they aren't. They come here and immediately join the pack which is a strict hierarchy controlled by the top dog. . . . They have a great time in the pack, but they aren't really very progressive. It was a hard lesson for some of the radical pet owners . . . to swallow. Not only have we failed to create the New Man in Berkeley. We haven't even created the New Dog."

A lack of notes weakens this lucid and informative volume. Those suspicious of the authors will question some of their assertions in the absence of documentation. Furthermore, the scheme for the organization of the book and its division into three parts is not entirely clear. And since some of the chapters have been published before (in modified or identical form) it would have been of interest to know where and when they had originally appeared.

Such flaws, however, do not diminish the authenticity and importance of *Destructive Generation*. It may be the most revealing document that has so far emerged about the dark side of the sixties and the long shadow it continues to cast into the nineties.

# Asking the Wrong Question

Prophetic Visions and Economic Realities: Protestants, Jews, & Catholics Confront the Bishops' Letter on the Economy. Edited by Charles Strain. *Eerdmans. 257 pp. $13.95.*

***Reviewed by***
**Kenneth R. Craycraft, Jr.**

Based upon its sub-title, one could imagine any of several different tacks this book might have taken. Editor Charles R. Strain assembled four teams of scholars from various fields and ostensibly wide-ranging points of view to discuss critically and produce papers about the 1986 Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter on the economy, *Economic Justice for All*. One could thus envision, for instance, debate about such things as the very appropriateness of the bishops writing such a letter, which in making concrete government policy suggestions clearly stretches the definition of "pastoral." Or the reader might have rightly expected to see argument about the effectiveness of, and alternative suggestions for, the policy proposals themselves. Most importantly, a book with this sub-title *should* have included arguments that confront the bishops' working presuppositions about poverty and wealth, the

Kenneth R. Craycraft, Jr. *is a Bradley Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Theology at Boston College.*

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nature of the Christian duty to the poor, and such terms as "economic rights," "redistribution," and "social justice." But, alas, in these and many other ways, the book falls woefully short.

More than just geographically, *Prophetic Visions and Economic Realities* suffers from a sort of parochialism that, despite the divergent traditions from which the authors work, makes each chapter sound much the same as the previous one. Nine of the sixteen scholars are from Chicago, five of them (including the editor) from DePaul University, which sponsored the project. While the reader is promised that several academic disciplines are represented, eleven of the contributors are theologians in some guise or other (including professors of "social ethics"). These things are not faults necessarily, nor do they condemn the book to failure. But if the purpose was to provide a panorama of opinions about the pastoral letter, these parochialisms may have contributed to the book's failure to present any substantive debate.

This is not to say that all the writers are simply "yes-persons." To be sure, there are sharp criticisms aimed at the bishops about such things as methodology, consistency, and adherence to historically Catholic social teaching. Rabbi Byron L. Sherwin, for example, says that "to the Jewish observer the pastoral letter does not seem to portray either an authentic Christian or a traditional Catholic position on economic justice." He thinks that the bishops have abandoned traditional Catholic thought in favor of documents from the past century that better fit their own political sensibilities. One recurring criticism of the bishops is their alleged naivete both in thinking that "community" is possible in a liberal society and assuming that America has something like a common moral language.

NOR do the writers all simply agree with one another. The four Jewish contributors give four distinct notions of what constitutes Jewish ethical methodology. Some Christian writers think that poverty is a means of grace, while others warn about the danger of such a notion. Mainline Protestant Timothy F. Sedgwick asserts that serving the poor communicates to them that "they are blessed because they have a privileged opportunity to know God," while Roman Catholic Charles R. Strain warns that we must avoid "manipulating the poor as the means for the rest of us to experience divine grace."

But, save one notable exception, the policy prescriptions made by the bishops are either accepted uncritically or criticized for not going far enough in suggesting redistributive plans for alleviating poverty (at least two contributors explicitly advocate a socialist economy). All but one scholar think the bishops are correct in their general point that a capitalist society contains inherent contradictions which must be overcome by redistributive means if we are to achieve "social justice." Further, these fifteen think that redistribution in some form or other really can alleviate poverty, and that this is necessary to ensure each person's "economic rights." (Neither of the terms "social justice" or "economic rights" is examined for its legitimacy, as one would expect in a book that is supposed to "confront" the bishops.) Finally, all but one of the writers, whether explicitly or implicitly, agree with the notion that Christian theology advocates that government demonstrate a "preferential option for the poor." The introduction to the section by Evangelicals, for instance, chastises other Evangelicals for not spending much time "promoting 'a preferential option for the poor.'" Evangelical Richard J. Mouw asserts that this non-promotion in terms of policy recommendations demonstrates a "lack of sympathy for the poor."

The lone voice of dissent is that of Evangelical political scientist Mark Amstutz, who, while praising the bishops for their concentration on Christian responses to poverty, is critical of their proposed means to end it. "While I applaud their moral vision of justice and commitment to the poor," he explains, "as a social scientist I question the adequacy of the letter's analysis of Third World poverty and the implied policy prescriptions for alleviating it." In a volume containing some chapters which barely have anything to do with the bishops' letter, Amstutz's represents the only rigorous analysis of the policy proposals contained therein. Rather than discussing the transfer of existing wealth, explains Amstutz, the bishops might better have discussed the need to produce more—to create more wealth—and to advocate those institutions that best accomplish this.

AMSTUTZ recognizes that, though it is toned down somewhat in the final draft, the bishops live in a zero-sum economic world in which one person's profit is another person's loss. Thus, "the bishops' political economy assumes domestic and international structures to be the major impediment to economic justice." That is, the prosperity of the West (or North) is at the expense of the poverty of the East (or South). Another problem, explains Amstutz, is that the bishops assume that sufficiency, not poverty, is the natural condition of mankind. Indeed he might have been criticizing one of his fellow contributors, mainline Protestant economist Rebecca M. Blank, whose entire chapter pursues the question of what causes poverty.

This question—what causes poverty?—may be seen as the central question for both the bishops and the contributors to this book, which explains why both are woefully inadequate in suggesting how poverty can be substantially curtailed. When someone inquires after the cause of something, it is generally the case that that person desires the outcome about which he is asking the cause. Of course, no one thinks for a minute that the

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bishops want to find ways to increase poverty and suffering. Their desired economic ends are indeed noble: they want poverty to be eliminated as far as possible. But in that case the proper question to be asked is not "what causes poverty?" but rather "how can poverty, the natural state of man, be overcome?"

By pursuing the wrong question, the bishops will find that the ends they seek remain elusive. And by continually advocating programs that do not in fact reduce poverty—that indeed often make things worse—they will squander their moral capital. Christian charity cannot be made to function as an economic system, and the offering of suggestions that sound very much like government-instituted charity programs will not contribute to an understanding of how poverty can be overcome. What is needed is a book by scholars of divergent points of view who confront the bishops on this point. Save for one voice in the wilderness, *Prophetic Visions and Economic Realities* is not that book.

## Should Politics Be Sacralized?

Twin Powers: Politics and the Sacred. By Thomas Molnar. *Eerdmans. 147 pp. $9.95.*

***Reviewed by*** **John W. Cooper**

One of the most distinctive features of post-Enlightenment Western culture is its desacralization of the cosmos, the flip side of secularism. Not only has daily life been transformed by science—for example, we no longer look to the realm of the sacred for a framework to organize our lives—even Western religion itself has become more rational, less "superstitious."

One possible response to the desacralization of the cosmos is to shift from a politics based on divine sanction to a politics based on a virulently anti-religious totalitarianism—represented on the political right by Nazism and on the left by Communism. Another option is a politics based on reason, popular consent, the democratic process, and a pluralism that asks people to tolerate many things they will not endorse. For those who see little hope in either option, the only alternative is to resacralize the cosmos—something that cannot be consciously willed but can only unfold.

The founders of the American experiment did not want a sacralized politics. Most of them wanted the sacred to infuse society, not the state. They thus intended only an indirect religious influence on the political order. They believed that democratic pluralism was the only way for the diverse colonies to be peacefully melded into one nation. They feared the ideological certainty that so often accompanied divine kingship. Nevertheless, they believed that the Republic could not endure without a strong basis in morality and religious commitment.

In a recent book based on an impressive range of scholarship, *Twin Powers: Politics and the Sacred,* the well-known Catholic philosopher Thomas Molnar sets forth a critique and condemnation of both atheistic totalitarianism and liberal democracy.

Molnar documents the pervasive influence of the sacred in primitive, classical, and medieval cultures. Showing a thorough understanding of the seminal work of Mircea Eliade, Georges Duby, and Titus Burkhardt, Molnar describes a sacred cosmos in which art, work, education, and (most importantly for this book) politics are infused by a power that emanates from a transcendent source.

The author next shows how the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation (perhaps aided by the Jewish prophets' ambivalence toward kingship) began the process of cosmic desacralization. If God is completely revealed in Jesus Christ, says Molnar, then the cosmos is forever relativized. By focusing the sacred in the Savior, the world is freed to become a demonic, desacralized counter-god. Molnar's earlier work, *The Pagan Temptation,* further elucidates this theme.

With the dawn of the modern era, says Molnar, the desacralization process reached full speed with the "five scientific myths" of Hegel (the dialectics of master and slave), Darwin (permanent evolution from lower to higher forms), Marx (abolition of social class resulting in the workers' paradise), Nietzsche (the death of God and the rise of Superman), and Freud (the Oedipal murder of the father by his incestuous son). For Molnar, the intellectual life of modernity has lost its moorings; small wonder, then, that politics is adrift.

The desacralization of politics leads either to the horrors of totalitarianism or to the liberal tyranny of majority rule and individual rights. Says Molnar, democracy "is a purely rational and at the same time conflictual procedure because . . . [it] is founded on the untouchability of individuals and their interest." Democracy, for Molnar, is ultimately idolatrous, man's pathetic self-deification.

Molnar would apparently prefer a return to a traditional monarchy, an established church, and a homogeneous society. There is much to be said for stable traditional society when compared to the messy chaos of pluralistic democracy. Some monarchies even achieve a kind of check-and-balance system of power. But a benign dictatorship only stays benign by the good will of the dictator. There are no solid institutional mechanisms to counter overweening power and injustice. Even in a homogeneous society, monarchy is problematic. In today's multicultural societies, the sacral-monarchical model would virtually guarantee perpetual war.

Molnar explicitly rejects the judicious solutions offered by the Catholic John Courtney Murray and the Lutheran Richard John Neuhaus. Murray, Neuhaus, and others, such as Jacques Maritain and Michael Novak, offer a middle path between

John W. Cooper *is Executive Director of the James Madison Institute for Public Policy Studies in Tallahassee, Florida.*

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sacralized politics and militant secularism. They posit religious freedom, the institutional separation of church and state, and the intelligent interplay of religion and politics. They allow that Americans and other citizens of pluralistic democracies need a civic faith, but they distinguish between legitimate patriotism and genuine religion. They show how Marxism fails. And they also show how democratic pluralism, while it always runs the risk of merging with a philosophy of secularism that legitimates an unjust polity, can and usually does preserve enough of its spiritual and ethical moorings to sustain relative justice and freedom of religion.

Everyone who cares about the foundation of the good society ought to engage Molnar's argument. But in the final analysis, there is less danger to life, limb, and faith in liberal democracy rightly understood than in a hypothetical Christian monarchy.

## Fixing America

STRAIGHT SHOOTING: WHAT'S WRONG WITH AMERICA AND HOW TO FIX IT. By JOHN SILBER. *Harper and Row. 336 pp. $22.50.*

***Reviewed by*** **Quentin L. Quade**

THIS book's seemingly presumptuous subtitle prepared me not to like it. That predisposition was quickly set aside, as was the presumption of presumption. This is a very good book, well worth the reading. Even the title and subtitle are more apt than one would expect. While the author can hardly be said to have identified all our problems and their solutions, he most assuredly has chosen to write about crucial issues, and he has done so with clarity, forceful argument, and purposefulness. In so doing he has contributed to the fixing that is needed.

The book is presented in three parts, beginning with "First Principles." In this the author portrays several basic ideas that traditionally have informed and sustained American social structures. At the same time, these ideas have given meaning to individuals' activities within these structures. Much of today's difficulty, Silber argues, comes from the loss or erosion of these fundamental concepts. In the second part, "Lessons In School," the author analyzes the impact on our educational enterprise of the weakened values portrayed in the previous section. His idea of "education" extends outward from the schools to include the media and commercial expressions—in short, anything that helps form the public consciousness. Finally, the section called "Lessons Out of School" brings the first principles to bear on various public-policy issues. The specific areas chosen are from one point of view random and thus lacking an evident design. But all are important, and they are presented because the author has particular knowledge or experience on each. Using particular competence as a criterion for selection is not the worst idea one has ever encountered.

Silber judges that the United States is seriously beset by very large ills which diminish the quality of life here and which, if not corrected or lessened, imperil our existence as we have known it. These ills include what he takes to be the failure of our schools to educate properly *and* to offer and instill a worthwhile cultural heritage. Educational failure, of course, exacts a national price in the sense of making the community less potent; and it more immediately exacts a devastating price on the individual who experiences it, for that person will find empowerment and fulfillment elusive at best. The author also treats the drug curse, and the criminal behavior and resultant social turbulence that accompany illicit drug use. Familial breakdown, especially in the most downtrodden social segment, is also analyzed. Silber sees in this development the real potential for establishment of a permanent underclass, lacking mobility and hope. He is concerned as well for the loss of American competitiveness in world markets and its accompanying threat to internal strength and stability. And he devotes attention to the relative lack of coherence in American foreign policy, as exemplified in Central America.

THE author cannot be accused of picking easy matters on which to write. Nor can he be accused of avoiding or fuzzing the serious implications of these issues. His basic style is, indeed, one of "straight shooting" and straight talk. A reader can easily see where he starts, where he is going, and why. Silber's implicit epistemology is that of a metaphysical realist. He believes reality is discernible and that it can yield objective principles that should and can guide personal action. This essentialist foundation enables him to write strongly from an ethical as well as descriptive perspective. Particularly helpful is his realization that ethics and the need for ethical choosing inhere in all human situations, and call for a generally enlightened ethical disposition, not an "ethics of this" and an "ethics of that."

For all its strengths, *Straight Shooting* has some problems, some puzzles, and some surprising omissions. Numerous phenomena that are disturbing to the author—e.g., the low quality of Presidential debates, the proclivity of the press to become adversarial—cannot really be understood or assessed without relating them to institutional causes that precede and transcend the players. The two examples cited, for instance, are derived directly from the fact that, in the separation of powers, there is no sustaining government-opposition dialogue to lend seriousness and rationality to political exchange. Similarly, Silber does not note among contributing factors in the nation's run-amok litigiousness the fact that American judicial review, an adaptation of separation of powers, invites unending legal efforts by removing the expectation of finality from many legislative enactments. Elsewhere, there is a puzzling assertion that businessmen, *et al.*, should have the same rights of expression that academic freedom guarantees to

QUENTIN L. QUADE *is Executive Vice-President of Marquette University.*

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faculty—but that assertion destroys the real and substantial teleological distinction between the work of faculty (precisely to deal with and attempt to clarify and expand truth for its own sake) and other professions with quite different ends.

Perhaps the most striking omission is the absence of discussion about educational choice as a tool for attacking many of the elementary and secondary school problems that most concern Silber. This is surprising because Silber is familiar with and supportive of the fundamental concept. Thus he advocates a voucher system to help independent colleges and universities cope with the radically uneven financial playing field they occupy in competing with state-owned and state-financed universities. The principles which validate his position *re* higher education can have at least as great an impact on elementary and secondary education if one applies them there.

As noted, this book is much given to discussion of virtue and its absence in portions of contemporary education. Less is said, however, about the premises necessary to authorize and effectuate serious ethical education. There is a void in this area because in the mass public systems there is too little shared ethical premise from which ethical teaching can emanate. And what shared premises do exist too often are paralyzed by legal entanglements. Such schools tend to be reduced to providing least-common-denominator ethical strictures. The void is filled by the "social science" and "value-free" material so sharply criticized by Silber. When it is possible to place a school or a system on a shared and pronounced ethical structure, religious or otherwise, then it is possible to place the educational process and product firmly within such a structure, and thereby provide direction and substantive ethical content.

What public policy is called for to give life to such potentials? A policy aimed to enhance parental choice, through vouchers, is an obvious way to break the effective monopoly now held by many public systems, to attack the stultifying bureaucratic structures that have grown around such systems, to invite a spirit of performance and competitive attractiveness—and to make possible the teaching of serious ethical principles as the author wants. Silber refers to the "secularization" of America, but all evidence suggests that, in fact, the public is as religiously and spiritually oriented as ever. They need systems which make it possible for them to manifest these values in schools. They need to stop thinking about the public school systems as if they were ends unto themselves, and see instead that they are only means to the end of superior education for all educable children. When they see that, they will see also that systems must be tested against the end and replaced if found wanting.

The author himself succumbs to the temptation to confuse ends and means when he says "we of the older generation can accelerate the process of necessary reform of the public schools." That almost certainly puts the issue the wrong way, precisely because it portrays the "public schools" as ends rather than means. Our challenge is to present better educational offerings, using whatever tools are most efficacious, which no doubt would include public schools. Until we insist rigorously on that distinction, we will be trapped in a never-ending process of "reforming the public schools." Let us have as our objective the education and empowerment of all children and especially those in most disadvantaged circumstances. And let us open for those children and those who nourish them many paths to such a result. That is the notion of choice as a reforming dynamic. And it is not an abstraction, for, as James S. Coleman and others have conclusively shown, those religious-based independent schools in the heart of the cities are winning the educational wars. Our policy need is to enable more of those flowers to bloom.

At the outset I suggested that there was more to the author's "how to fix it" claim than one might normally expect. Its strong contribution in this regard is in the method of his work, even more than any specific remedies he offers. He provides clear recognition of real problems and calls them by their real names. He sees those problems whole, including their personal and ethical dimensions. He offers plausible solutions to the problems he identifies. By doing these things he forms the beginning of a dialectic which, if pursued vigorously, can produce intelligent policy response to our very great difficulties. And that is the only way to fix them.

## BRIEFLY NOTED

Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age. By Bruce B. Lawrence. *Harper & Row. 306 pp. $24.95.*

The subtitle says it all. Lawrence, who teaches the history of religion at Duke, attempts with modest success to analyze similarities between American fundamentalism and militant Muslims and Orthodox Jews in the Middle East. Unfortunately, the author does not resist the temptation to digress into lengthy academic excurses on almost any topic that impinges, however marginally, on the book's declared purpose. The impression lingers that there is an argument here that never manages to get out from under the author's assorted interests.

Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky, His Life and Legacy. By Sanford D. Horwitt. *Knopf. 595 pp. $29.95.*

From the early forties and, increasingly, up to his death in 1972, Saul Alinsky was a controversial figure. As Mr. Horwitt would quickly point out, and as Mr. Alinsky would eagerly second, that is an almost ludicrous understatement. Alinsky's boundless and often abrasive egotism thrived on controversy and confrontation. That is one part of the story and Horwitt, to his credit, does not fudge it. The other part is the enor-

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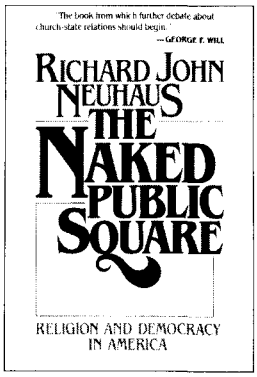
mous, and usually constructive, influence that Alinsky's work had on the churches in relating to the disempowered in American life. Beginning with the organizing of the Back of the Yards in Chicago, Alinsky and company shaped Roman Catholic responses in particular to "the urban crisis." In *Reveille for Radicals* and, toward the end of his life, in *Rules for Radicals,* Alinsky attempted to channel radical impulses toward the fulfillment of an essentially Madisonian view of American democracy. In the 1960s he courageously challenged the separatism of black nationalists and the anti-Americanism of the New Left, as well as the statist utopianism of the war on poverty. A more baneful influence was his obsession with threat and conflict as the sole instruments of empowerment. In liberationist religious rhetoric today, many who talk about violence as justified counter-violence against the violence of "the system" draw on the language of Alinsky but share little of his understanding of the democratic process. The Industrial Areas Foundation which he launched continues today with much more refined and sophisticated programs involving networks of churches in more than twenty cities. There is no doubt that Saul Alinsky was excessive in almost everything he did; he was ever posturing, strategizing, and caught up in non-stop talking about what it means to be a radical. But he lived in excessive times, from the Old Left through the explosion of the myriad leftisms of the 1960s. Sanford Horwitt is clearly nostalgic for those good old days. But his spirited telling of a remarkable life leaves one with the distinct impression that, were Saul Alinsky around today, he would be helping the churches to do something constructive about making this representative democracy work a little better. Whatever he might propose, he would, of course, call it radical.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AFRICAN CATHOLICISM: ESSAYS IN DISCOVERY. By ADRIAN HASTINGS. *Trinity Press International. 208 pp. $14.95 paper.*

THE AUTHOR, who is now professor of theology at the University of Leeds, has for more than thirty years been embroiled in the life of the church in Africa. He is surely one of the more judicious European writers about Christianity in a continent where Christianity is growing faster than anywhere else. Although there are more than seventy million Roman Catholics in Africa, Hastings is not at all sure that what he calls "the Catholic moment" has not been missed. In 1968 at Kampala, Pope Paul VI declared, "You may and you must have an African Christianity." In subsequent years, Hastings argues, little has been done in terms of the indigenization of the faith. His contention that the demand for clerical celibacy, and the result of widespread clerical promiscuity, are major obstacles to the flourishing of Catholicism in Africa will not be well received in Rome. But, on this and other questions, he makes his case in a manner that compels careful consideration. (This, incidentally, is as good an occasion as any to note

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the welcome appearance of Trinity Press International, a Philadelphia-based enterprise launched in cooperation with SCM Press in London.)

Challenge to Apartheid: Toward a Moral National Resistance. By Mokgethi Motlhabi. *Eerdmans. 243 pp. $13.95 paper.*

With the aid of a grant from the Ford Foundation, the author, who directs the Educational Opportunities Council in Johannesburg, was given time at Boston University to do serious academic reflection on the process of change in his homeland. His reflection draws heavily on the work of Walter G. Muelder of that school, now retired, but takes original turns as he applies Muelder's approach to the experience of radical anti-apartheid groups in South Africa. While he is exceedingly, perhaps understandably, cautious about criticizing the radicalisms abounding in South Africa, there is no doubt about Molthabi's concern that social and political transformation in that country be just to all concerned. Regrettably, proposals for change from sources outside the circle of the "radicalized" tend to be ignored or lightly dismissed. *Challenge* is nonetheless a useful introduction to aspects of radical thought in South Africa, and it does encourage the writers of manifestos and party tracts to consider questions of justice that are often subordinated to the immediate and the tactical.

A Requiem for Hitler and Other New Perspectives on the German Church Struggle. By Klaus Scholder. *Trinity Press International. 203 pp. $15.95 paper.*

Scholder, who died a still young man in 1985, gave us the two-volume work *The Churches and the Third Reich*, undoubtedly the best thing on the subject in English. (The second volume was completed by friends after his death and does not have the coherence of the first.) The present book is a collection of ten essays, in some ways expanding on the earlier work. The title is from an essay describing the role of Adolf Cardinal Bertram of Breslau, the senior German prelate, who, upon hearing of Hitler's death, ordered a requiem mass to be said in his churches. Perhaps of greatest interest is an essay on Judaism and Christianity in Nazi ideology. Scholder is convinced that National Socialism was essentially a racial movement and that anti-Semitism was its most fundamental dogma. Until 1937, Hitler hoped that the two Christian confessions (Roman Catholic and Lutheran) could be induced to join the Nazis in their war on the Jews. Deeply disappointed by the churches, he made it increasingly clear that he intended to destroy them after he was finished with the war, and with the Jews. What he viewed as the failure of the churches confirmed him in the view that they—along with Bolshevism and capitalism—had succumbed to "the Jewish disease." *A Requiem for Hitler* is a welcome addition to the legacy of Klaus Scholder.

Black Theology and Black Power. By James H. Cone. *Harper & Row. 165 pp. $8.95.*

This is the "20th Anniversary Edition" of a book that set off fireworks in academic theology in the late 1960s. It is generally thought that Cone's version of black liberation theology has had little impact on the black pulpit or pew, but some still believe it is the wave of the future. Twenty years later, there are some things Cone says he would change. He now recognizes, for instance, the book's "complete blindness to the problem of sexism." For this edition he was tempted to make some revisions, "but I decided to let the language remain unchanged as a reminder how sexist I once was and also that I might be encouraged never to forget it." Perhaps more substantively, he now repents of the influence of Karl Barth on his thinking. "Barth's assertion of the Word of God in opposition to natural theology in the context of Germany during the 1930s may have been useful. But the same theological methodology cannot be applied to the cultural history of African-Americans in the Americas or to Africans and Asians on their continents." The suggestion that a theology of blood and race, such as Barth opposed under the Nazis, is appropriate for select communities today is breathtaking in its implications. Considering the substantive shift in his views, one cannot help but wonder why Professor Cone would want this unrevised text reissued now.

20th Century Religious Thought. By John Macquarrie. *Trinity Press International. 468 pp. $19.95.*

Macquarrie, now emeritus at Oxford, has updated an eminently useful guide that first appeared in 1963. Although himself of an existentialist persuasion, the author strives to be fair to a maddening variety of approaches to religion, and almost always succeeds. Since much of twentieth-century religious thought is in reaction to the several schools of the late nineteenth century, Macquarrie appropriately includes extensive discussion of that earlier period. Also, since the author believes that the line between theology and philosophy is by no means so clear as some think, *20th Century Religious Thought* turns out to be a guide to philosophy as well—or at least to philosophy that takes on the questions usually associated with religion. This book deserves a place in the library of the educated generalist, as well as the theologically and philosophically trained.

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*Richard John Neuhaus*

# The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

# The Feminist Faith

Elizabeth Achtemeier, professor of Bible at Union Theological Seminary, Virginia, has flatly asserted that radical feminist theology is "another religion." Some may think that judgment excessive. After all, there are many women who think of themselves as feminists and are also determined to be orthodox Christians. Here the distinction between feminist and radical feminist comes into play. Women (and men) who say they are feminists often mean to say no more than that they think women should be treated more fairly than they have been treated in the past. They want the views, influences, and experiences of women to be taken more fully into account. They want women to have a greater opportunity to participate in all activities where gender differences are not pertinent. No sensible person can argue against feminism so defined. But such feminism has little or nothing to do with feminist theology today.

There is a world of difference between feminism as fairness and feminism as ideology. Feminist theology, almost by definition, reflects the second kind of feminism. Unfortunately, ideological feminism frequently succeeds in infiltrating feminism as fairness. One reason for that is that women who feel frustrated in their quest for fairness are susceptible to the suggestion that unfairness is "systemic," is built into the very structure of Christianity. That suggestion, indeed that dogma, is the keystone of feminist theology. Feminist theology may be expressed in "moderate" or "radical" forms, but the enterprise itself is inherently radical. This is very helpfully clarified by Carter Heyward, one of the foremost practitioners of feminist theology, in a recent essay.

Heyward, who teaches at the Episcopal Divinity School in Massachusetts, is the author of, among other books, *Speaking of Christ: A Lesbian Feminist Voice* and *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God.* In the present essay ("Suffering, redemption, and Christ: Shifting the grounds of feminist Christology"), Heyward surveys a slew of recent books in feminist theology, indicating the ways in which they reflect the growing tensions between feminism and historic Christianity. Heyward herself is convinced that the time has come for feminists to move beyond being "reactive to more conventional presentations of Jesus Christ." The challenge, she writes, is for feminists to help "one another dare 're-image redemption.'"

There is an increasing awareness, according to Heyward, that feminists have been hampered by trying to do theology within a normative context that is alien to their own experience. She writes, "For white christian [sic] feminists, our senses of primary vocational accountability are drawn away from the magisterium toward one another and other participants in the ongoing struggles for justice, sanity, and compassion." Something like a new feminist magisterium, or teaching authority, is required. If one is to be in some significant sense a *Christian* feminist, this requires, in turn, a "re-imaging" of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The *his*tory of Jesus and what the Church has made of him must be sharply relativized. As Heyward puts it, "Our christological boundaries neither begin nor end with the Jesus-story, but rather with *our passion.*" (Emphasis hers.)

She indicates what is meant by "our passion" in current feminist thought: "the quality of our lives-in-relation to others, including Jesus, who may or may not be, for us, the Christ, Savior, or Lord. The roles Jesus plays for us may vary, depending upon how we have come to know ourselves in relation to the Jesus story and christian tradition. These new boundaries invite us to live *passionate* lives which are, by definition, redemptive—from a christian perspective, *christic.*" Here we come upon an interesting play on the connection between passion and redemption. It is not the passion (*viz* suffering) of Jesus that works our redemption but the incorporation of Jesus into our passion (including erotic passion) that redeems him as a "christic" figure.

As Heyward understands the development of feminist theology, incorporating Jesus is optional,

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while passion is definitely not. "Passion is the foundational quality of human being, the most sacred dimension of who we are. It is sensual, embodied knowledge of ourselves as connected rightly to one another, in mutually empowering relationship. . . . [It is] an intense yearning to share and celebrate our liberated/liberating lives." Heyward recognizes that the jargon of empowerment and liberation may, for many feminists, have no connection with Jesus or Christianity. This need not be excessively troubling to feminist theology, however. "The specifically 'christian' character of our heritage and faith-community may keep the Jesus-story alive for us," she writes. It depends on what role Jesus has played in our own stories.

"If 'Jesus' has been largely positive, as he has been for many within the African-American religious tradition," Heyward writes, "the character of his ongoing presence can indeed redeem African Americans. If 'Jesus' has been negative, as in many instances of sexual abuse in his name, it may be that the power of women's commitments to suffer no more abuse may have to redeem Jesus." She agrees with "womanist theologian" Jacquelyn Grant that Jesus has been redeeming black women, just as black women have been redeeming Jesus. The situation is somewhat more complex for white womanist theologians in these "christofascist" (Dorothee Soelle) times. By "christofascism" Heyward means "the ideology set in place by Reagan-Bush," and apparently Jesus and white people in general are guilty of some complicity in it. "It is an ideology of violence toward women, people of color, the earth and its many creatures, lesbians and gaymen, and all who are old, poor, ill, differently-abled or in any other way deviant from the 'normative human being' (the white, economically privileged, ostensibly heterosexual, able-bodied, christian male)."

In this climate of christofascism, Heyward writes, "It is not enough to ordain women, clean up sexist language, hire women and people of color, or otherwise merely rearrange the theological furniture." As useful as such ameliorative measures may be to the radical feminist agenda, they clearly do not get to the heart of the matter. They must be seen as preliminary moves in attacking "the entire theological structure [that is] damaged by the hetero/sexism, racism, classism, imperialism, and other dynamics of domination and control set in place long ago and still pervasive." In the view of womanist theology, the heart of the matter is the Christian doctrine of atonement. As Heyward and Beverly Harrison have written, that doctrine "represents the sadomasochism of Christian teaching at its most transparent." Heyward cites the recent work of Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker who ask, "Is it any wonder that there is so much abuse in modern society when the predominant image or theology of the culture is of 'divine child abuse'—God the Father demanding and carrying out the suffering and death of his own son?"

The lesbian feminist voice of unremitting rage, to which Carter Heyward and others would give expression, is, as claimed, the vanguard of feminist theology; and that theology is, as claimed, determinedly radical. That is to say, it is radical in its rejection of historic Christianity. At the same time, it is meekly accommodating toward the impassioned prejudices that still prevail in the most leftward backwaters of the elite culture, right down to descrying the "fascism" of what is described as America's pseudo-democracy. Despite the heavy breathing of the literature, the so very familiar worldview of feminist theology is touchingly tired and tattered. Heavy breathing is perhaps required to artificially respire the rages and rhetorics of the sixties that most of the culture has long since left behind. As sociologists remind us, religion is a "soft institution," and no institution in religion is softer than the divinity school. In that light it is perhaps not surprising that theological education is amenable to serving as the final resting place for radicalisms past, including the variant that is "womanist theology." But whatever the sociological explanation, Carter Heyward and her colleagues helpfully clarify what Elizabeth Achtemeier means when she says that feminist theology is "another religion."

FT

# Martin Luther King and Human Nature

One takes wisdom where it is to be found, although it must be admitted that *The Nation*, flagship journal of the storm-tossed left, seems an unlikely source. The subject is Ralph David Abernathy's autobiography, *And The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, and the very uncivil attack on Abernathy by the civil rights establishment because he wrote with unexpected candor about the sexual proclivities of Martin Luther King, Jr. Your editor has discussed the controversy in some detail (*Commentary*, February), including why it has raised the hackles of some professional blacks. (The chief reason is that, inadvertently or not, Abernathy's book undercuts the claim that the present civil rights establishment is a continuation of the movement led by King from 1956 to his death in 1968.)

But now in *The Nation* Peter Marin expands on the questions the book raises about virtue and the political left. "What I'd like," he writes, "is for

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everyone to leave Abernathy alone." If Abernathy is telling the truth, and Marin sensibly thinks he is, we may even owe him a debt of gratitude. Marin's reasoning may at first sound like a liberal cliche. "If King possessed a truth, as he did, and if his words sounded in the heart as they did because they carried the truth, how can another truth injure it? For the truth is all of a piece; it is what we must live with, like it or not; and its presence, no matter how it hurts or seems to destroy (and make no mistake, truth always destroys), also heals. It makes us whole and sets us free, even when it is a truth as small and unimportant as the truth of King's sexual life."

The truth, Marin suggests, may even set some people free to recognize the reality of original sin, or at least the ambiguity of the human condition. "We on the left have got to recognize what few Americans want to acknowledge, whatever their politics: that virtue is always partial, that good and bad are mixed in every policy and every person, that the correctness of one's moral or political position is no guarantee of ultimate virtue or superiority and that vision, virtue, and goodness grow side by side with, and even out of, human error and corruption. Those who do not understand this will forever remain shrill children." The shrill children of partisan passion do not find that easy to take. "That, of course, often has not been enough for most of us who hold passionate views. What we believe (or hope) is that opinions, convictions, or praxis somehow make us better than others. It is not justice alone that draws us, inspires us. It is also the greedy and vain dream of being somehow better than others, not only more 'right' but also more holy."

Marin has been around on the left and thinks there are larger lessons to be learned. "There has always been on the left, at least as long as I've been alive, a desperate need for a sensed superiority or even purity—a kind of moral hygiene through which large numbers of people vigorously and hungrily assert, through politics, a need for a feeling of virtue. We tend to see those who oppose us as villains, or of the Devil's party and somehow by nature inferior to us. This was clear in the 1960s, especially in the supposed sexual revolution, when every sexual preference or activity was presented as healthy, or a social good, and where those who were not flagrantly sexual, or homosexual, or bisexual, were perceived as repressed and sick. Each person, in relation to sexuality as well as politics, tended to insist that his or her own preference or idiosyncrasy was in itself a source of virtue, wisdom, or salvation."

### *Stridency, Self-Righteousness, and Unrighteousness*

He condemns the moral stridency of the prolife movement (being proabortion is *de rigueur* on the left), but then he adds, "That stridency is often more than matched on our side, where all those who oppose abortion are seen as knaves, dupes, or oppressors. We seem unable to credit them with a concern for life, or a muddled love for it, somehow equal to our own." Marin's point is that we are all very fallible human beings, and that the left has a harder time accepting that because it undermines confidence in "the larger dream of the perfectibility of human nature or the social order." He ends up on this note: "We do know that King was not a perfect man, or maybe not even a 'good' man. Again, so what? . . . I'm not bothered by the fact that King was immersed in life, whatever shape it may have taken, a few hours before his death. . . ."

Marin's critique of the self-righteousness of the left is welcome, and it must be readily acknowledged that there is similar self-righteousness on the right, although usually based on quite different reasoning. That said, however, one suspects there is something basically flawed in an argument that puts "good" in quotation marks. What is basically wrong in Marin's argument is that it is an argument for libertinism. Maybe King was not a good man. "So what?" Marin asks. Some answers to that are: So the nation, and black youth in particular, are deprived of a model to emulate; so many Christians, and blacks in particular, feel betrayed by a pastor who contradicted in private what he preached in public; so cynicism about virtue, both private and public, is given a big boost.

### *Good, Great, and Flawed*

Now our view is that Martin Luther King, Jr. was a good man in many and important respects, and, in historical terms, a great man. But cutting through his life was a deep moral incoherence, a servitude to the commands of Eros. What Peter Marin does not say is that King might more nobly have coped with his devils if such servitude had not been approved, even celebrated, on the left. One of the saddest parts of Abernathy's book is that, in all their years as closest friends, he only once dared to raise with King the question of his womanizing, and then not because it was morally wrong but because the FBI knew about it and would use it against King and his cause. Indeed, Abernathy indicates that King's adulteries were not that different from the habits of other leaders in the movement of the time. Contra Marin, the lesson to be learned by the left is not that nobody's perfect (as valuable as that lesson is), but that the left's laissez-faire sexual ethics ends up in the ruination of lives. The prime examples today are the teenage girls of the black underclass made pregnant by studs who defiantly say, "So what? Dr. King did it."

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## Biology and Culture

Sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson, curiously enough, is celebrated by some who profess to be proponents of cultural conservatism and its religious foundations. Wilson is among the foremost champions of a rigid and dogmatic scientism whose hostility to religion might aptly be called rabid. In his view, the pretensions of religion and moral philosophy only occlude the "scientific" fact that our ideas and behaviors are "wired in" by natural selection, producing "gut feelings" which are "largely unconscious and irrational."

What we mistakenly take to be the "oracle" of moral or religious wisdom, he writes, "resides in the deep emotional centers of the brain, most probably within the limbic system." We are biologically "programmed" to think and act as we do, and it is no more than human conceit to seek justifying "reasons" beyond biological determinism. "Human behavior," he writes in *On Human Nature*, "like the deepest capacities for emotional response which drive and guide it, is the circuitous technique by which human genetic material has been and will be kept intact. Morality has no other demonstrable ultimate function."

As Charles Taylor explains in his brilliant book, *Sources of the Self*, Wilson represents a position of scientistic reductionism that has quite "swallowed up" morality, and makes it impossible to give any account of the good or the goods by which life might be morally ordered. Having discarded the traditional moral justifications, including religion, Wilson says that he still wants to "see beyond the blind decision-making process of natural selection and to envision the history and future of our genes against the background of the entire human species." His reductionist premises, however, provide no way to escape the trap of biological fate.

Why, then, should some cultural conservatives be celebrating Edward O. Wilson? The answer, we expect, is that there is a small sidestream of conservatism that is obsessed with the idea of keeping, as Wilson says, human genetic material intact. According to that conservatism, the traditions it prizes are grounded not so much in culture, philosophy, and religion as in biology, race, and good genetic stock. From that it follows that we should severely restrict immigration and the growth of inferior population groups, while, at the same time, adopting policies that secure the dominance of the presumably purer "genetic material" that gave birth to our civilization. This position is, in our judgment, as morally odious as it is intellectually muddled. On the other hand, in the continuing sorting out of political and intellectual alignments, it is perhaps useful to have some conservatives so publicly take their stand with such as Edward O. Wilson. It helps other conservatives understand more clearly the kind of conservatives that they are not.

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## Watching the Numbers

The Princeton Religion Research Center, headed by George Gallup, Jr., renders an important service by its regular monitoring of the religious scene. Many of the more interesting results are included in *The People's Religion: American Faith in the 90s* (Gallup and Jim Castelli, Macmillan). The essential message is no surprise: America continues to be incorrigibly religious. In recent studies much attention has been paid the growing number of "unchurched," the people who claim no religious affiliation. They were 6% in 1947, 2% in 1967, and are now 8%. Among the interesting points made by Gallup and Castelli, however, is that the unchurched are in important respects no less religious than the churched. In many cases, it seems, they are unchurched because they haven't found a church that meets their spiritual expectations.

Among those who do claim a church, there have been significant shifts over the last two decades. For instance, in 1967 14% of the population was Methodist, while only 9% is today. The Presbyterian decline is even more dramatic, from 6% to 3%, while Episcopalians have gone from 3% to 2%. Baptists and Lutherans have held steady at, respectively, 20% and 6%. (The Episcopalian figure reminds us of a question we first heard posed by our colleague Michael Novak. "Women," he noted, "are 52% of the population, blacks are 12%, Hispanics are 10%, the handicapped are 5%, and Episcopalians are 2%." The question: "Which of the above groups does not think of itself as a minority?")

Jews have suffered a severe decline, from 5% of the population in 1947 to 2% today. Of course there is the important factor that Jewish identity has to do with both ethnicity and religion, and, for the majority of Jews, mainly with ethnicity. Some secular Jews, when asked about their religious affiliation, may answer "none," and therefore end up in the "unchurched" column. The number of religiously practicing Jews in the country may be smaller than the number of Orthodox Christians (Greek, Rumanian, Russian, etc.). Yet, very much unlike the case with Jews, the Orthodox presence in America seems to be almost invisible. Orthodox Christianity is hardly a blip on the American cultural screen, although on the world scene and in terms of theological weight, it is the major alternative to the Christianity of the West. Indicative of Orthodoxy's

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invisibility is that, in the 278 pages of *The People's Religion,* it gets one sentence in passing.

The most dramatic change of recent decades is the growth of Roman Catholicism. In 1947, Protestants outnumbered Catholics by a 3.5 to 1 margin (69% to 20%). In 1987, Protestants outnumbered Catholics by only a 2 to 1 margin (57% to 28%). Significantly, the gap is even narrower among young people. Among those age 18 to 24, 49% say they are Protestant and 31% say they are Catholic. With the percentage of Protestants hovering around 50%, Gallup and Castelli note, the time is not far off when "nominal Protestants will no longer make up a majority of the American people." They further suggest that in the early decades of the next century "Catholics could vie with Protestants as the dominant religious group in America." That, we would suggest, is not quite accurate.

Catholics are now the dominant religious group in America, at least numerically. And that for the simple reason that the category of "Protestants" does not constitute a "religious group." "Protestant" denotes nothing more than non-Catholic, non-Orthodox, non-Jewish, or non-unchurched. Religiously and sociologically, for instance, the differences between Assemblies of God or independent Baptist, on the one hand, and Lutheran or Episcopalian, on the other, are greater than the differences between the latter two and Catholics. Employing a generous definition of "Evangelical," one could argue that there are as many Evangelicals as Roman Catholics. But they, too, do not constitute a "religious group" in quite the same way. Those identified as Evangelicals are spread across denominational lines and have no common institutional expression.

Of course, it might be objected that the diversities and contradictions within Catholicism are such that it does not count as a "religious group" either. But that is pushing matters. The fact is that, for all their differences, Catholics know what church it is they think they belong to when they say they are Catholics. No other association that warrants the term "religious group" is anywhere near as large as the Roman Catholic Church. So, *if* we are to speak about a dominant religious group in America today, it is clearly Catholics. But, one must immediately add, "at least numerically." For it is just as clear that Catholics are not dominant culturally. And there are those who would argue that Catholicism in America has been so pervasively "Protestantized" that, in the end, it will reinforce rather than challenge the Protestant hegemony in American culture. On that view, the role of sustaining Protestantism's "Righteous Empire" (Marty) is now passing from the liberal oldline churches to Roman Catholicism.

Whether or not one finds that view persuasive, it should be obvious that the story of religion in America will increasingly be the story of Catholicism in America. Within Catholicism there are worlds within worlds, and the same is true of the more amorphous phenomenon of Evangelicalism. But these two forces, Catholicism and Evangelicalism, now have the leading part in shaping the future of religion in America and, if religion is the heart of culture, the future of America. Those in our cultural elites who still think of Catholicism as an immigrant intrusion and of born-again Christianity as a species of primitivism are having a hard time coming to terms with that reality.

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# THEOLOGY TODAY

"Oh God, Poor God" is an incisive and sadly droll report on the state of contemporary theology by William J. Abraham of Perkins School of Theology. Writing in *The American Scholar,* Abraham notes that the theological guild in oldline Protestantism and, increasingly, in Roman Catholicism has quite abandoned the classical themes and texts of the Christian tradition. Varieties of liberationist and feminist theology, he says, have succeeded in establishing the rigid orthodoxy that the Gospel must be made "meaningful" to the modern world, and any gospel deemed to be meaningful thereby becomes the Gospel. Meaningful, in turn, is defined in terms of political liberation from real or alleged oppressions. With only the most superficial familiarity with the Christian texts—none of them considered authoritative—theology students are expected in a semester or two to come up with their own creed, which they are then sent out to inflict upon hapless congregations. Meanwhile, the business of teaching theology has become an intellectual embarrassment. Abraham writes:

"What this means is that the theologian has become intellectually lazy. This laziness is initially expressed in a lamentable failure to deal with the sociological and philosophical issues related to the fundamental claims that are being advanced. The habit begins because of the omission of these disciplines from the basic training of theologians. Sociology of religion hardly exists at the master of divinity level, and philosophy of religion is not taken very seriously. Even at the graduate level, the introduction to these disciplines is perfunctory; insufficient time is given for the maturing theologian to find his or her bearings in the relevant material. Where philosophy is taken seriously, the approach tends to be in the tradition of Hegel and Heidegger, with disparaging glances directed here and there at the debate in recent Anglo-American philosophy on

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the nature of religious language. As a result, the most astonishing claims about the nature of society, or about the relation between interests and truth, or about the character and meaning of religious discourse, or about the fundamental character of all knowledge, or about the rationality of religious belief can be advanced without any sense of internal self-criticism and with unchallengeable dogmatism. Moral passion displaces intellectual rigor; righteous indignation and thinly veiled anger do service for analytical skill; primary sources in the field, including that of approved authorities like Marx, are treated as already read; worse still, opponents are dismissed because they do not belong to the favored group or class. By wielding a set of code words and by stitching together a diverse set of elusive sociological and philosophical jargon, the theologian is able to give the impression that we are confronted by a passionate and enduring vision of reality. In truth, what we have for the most part is the skillful reworking and expansion of the dregs of the Western political Enlightenment. It is small wonder that those who thirst for God as a living reality and yearn for the company of the saints and martyrs in the community of God's grace turn aside in disappointment; they have been looking for bread and have been once more offered a stone."

But all is not lost. Abraham discerns signs of hope in two developments. First, there is a dramatic growth in the number of professional philosophers who are picking up the classical questions of theology that the theologians have abandoned. (Among North Americans, he mentions William Alston, George Mavrodes, Peter Van Inwagen, Robert Adams, Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Eleanore Stump, Alan Donagan, and Alasdair MacIntyre.) Second, he thinks that Eastern Orthodoxy, small though it is in this country, is keeping the tradition alive and may become the provocation that will one day recall the churches of the West to "the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude).

At points Abraham paints with a broad brush. There are more theologians than he suspects who have not bowed the knee to the baalim of political relevance. And some of the work being done by Evangelicals and other conservative Christians is more intellectually impressive than he indicates. Yet his depiction of academic theology today is essentially correct. The marginalization and exclusion of theology in contemporary intellectual life is in large part the achievement of theologians. An English sociologist, not himself a Christian, put it to Abraham this way: "Modern theologians are so worried about being kicked in the ditch by the modern world that they hastily jump into it to avoid that fate." That does not say it all, but it says a great deal about theology today.

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# Politics and Class

Among the merits of Robert Bork's *The Tempting of America* is the remarkable way in which it makes accessible to the lay reader current developments in legal theory and practice. Indeed, the book is much more about jurisprudence than it is about the trial of Robert Bork by the hanging judges Edward Kennedy, Joe Biden, and their colleagues in the Senate. Bork's incisive critique of what is happening in the law schools suggests that it is not that different from what is happening in many other fields, including religion. Myriad revisionisms and deconstructionisms are eroding the foundations of law itself. Bork's argument that judges are morally required to limit themselves to the "original understanding" of the Constitution is premised on what should be obvious: if courts are not bound by the Constitution, citizens may wonder why they should be bound by the courts.

Bork allows that many judges and law professors probably do not understand the destructive process that they are helping to further. However, he carefully and amply documents the fact that many others know precisely what they are up to, making no secret of their intention to use the imperial judiciary in order to replace democratic governance with the rule of the "knowledge class." As with the "death of God" and the abolition of authoritative texts in theology, so the death of law opens the way for the masters of symbolic knowledge to give free rein to their will to power. After reading Bork's description of the state of legal theory, Gertrude Himmelfarb, the intellectual historian, wrote him: "This is precisely the situation in literature and history—abstract, abstruse, highly methodological—the point of which is to relativize the disciplines thoroughly. Any methodology becomes permissible (except, of course, the traditional one), and any reading of the texts becomes legitimate (except, of course, that of the author). The purpose is not only to create a new privileged mandarin class who alone are competent to interpret the text, but also to re-create the discipline *de novo* so as the better to politicize it, to create a *tabula rasa* upon which anything can be written. Original understanding is to the law what traditional, factual, documentary history is to the historian."

Whether in law, literature, history, or theology, a methodology that is respectful of "original understanding" does not ignore hermeneutical problems. Original understanding comprehends the cultural and historical "conditionings" that obsess the professional complexifiers who are so skilled at warding off the threat of clarity. It is understood that the interpreter cannot get inside the mind of the authors of the Constitution or the biblical texts. But it is also understood that the text has a *public* meaning that is historically accessible and therefore

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not subject to the unbridled subjectivism of those who would take words captive to their own purposes. The importance of *The Tempting of America* reaches far beyond legal theory and the temptation of the courts to displace republican self-governance. It is a lucid and disturbing analysis of the legal dimension of a much more comprehensive war for the control of the culture. Those who think that talk about class struggle is exaggerated have likely not been paying close attention to the political success of the knowledge class at Harvard Divinity School as well as Harvard Law School, not to mention hundreds of other schools of lesser prominence.

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# AMBUSHED ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

We have been waiting for the controversy that such a document should surely arouse. But there has been an eerie, perhaps embarrassed, silence after the initial and enthusiastic story by Marjorie Hyer in the *Washington Post*. The document in question is "The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion." Appearing toward the end of last year, it was allegedly signed by more than two thousand "Third World theologians" and was "coordinated" by Sojourners and the Center of Concern, two self-declared radical groups in Washington, D.C. The gist of this remarkable statement is that there is a conspiracy of "right-wing Christians" who support Western imperialism, for which mortal and unrepented sinning such Christians are declared excommunicate.

"The Road to Damascus" paints with an astonishingly broad brush. The only sinner named is the respected Institute on Religion and Democracy, a Washington think tank concerned about democracy and religious liberty around the world. But the document leaves no doubt that there is "a conspiracy so vast" (J. McCarthy) that there are thousands who must now be excluded from the Body of Christ. The Christian world is sharply divided between the children of darkness and the children of light, according to this statement. The children of darkness are "the religious right, right-wing Christianity, state theology, the theology of reconciliation, the neo-Christendom movements, and anti-communist evangelicals." In the other corner are the children of light: "liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology, minjung theology, theology of struggle, the Church of the poor, the progressive Church, and basic Christian communities."

The children of darkness are in thrall to capitalism, imperialism, and anti-Communism, they "serve the idols of death rather than the God of life," have turned Christianity into a "weapon against the people," and are therefore guilty of "heresy and apostasy, hypocrisy and blasphemy." The children of light in the liberationist struggle, on the other hand, resist exploitative neo-colonialism, recognizing that "most Third World countries are still dominated by one or more imperial power—the United States, Japan, and Western Europe." Critics of liberationist theologies, we are told, have set themselves against the saving work of God in history. While most of the signatories are unknown in this country (the category of "theologians" is very broadly defined), one is struck by the names of eight bishops from the Philippines. Since John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger have issued very stiff criticisms of liberationist theologies, one wonders if these bishops really mean to say that they too are excommunicate. And, if so, one wonders further what church these bishops now think *they* belong to.

In fact, "The Road to Damascus" does suggest that a new church has been founded, The People's Church of the Anti-Imperialist Struggle. According to this document, "the truth of Christian faith" has little or nothing to do with faith in Christ, Scripture, or the classic creeds, and everything to do with a socio-economic analysis of class struggle. The credal key, as might be expected, is "the preferential option for the poor." Perhaps the invocation of "the preferential option" explains in part the silence to which this strange document has been treated by the church press in this country. Nobody wants to be perceived as opposing those who speak for the poor. Given the credal status accorded its socio-economic analysis, however, it would seem that the document is deserving of more careful examination.

### *Examining the Prophecy*

George Weigel of the Ethics and Public Policy Center (yet another Washington think tank) has read the document with care and offers some pertinent observations in *American Purpose*: "The time is long past when those who most loudly proclaim their 'preferential option for the poor' should be given the benefit of the doubt. The world has learned some things about poverty and wealth, development and underdevelopment, these last few decades or so. We have learned that human resources and capital are as important, and probably more important, than natural resources. We have learned that market-oriented economies are far more likely to raise the poor's standard of living than state-centered or command economies. We have learned that the entrepreneurial energies of the people of the Third World are being strangled by a thick net of mercantilist and modern statist regulations. We have

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learned that postindependence dictators in the Third World are often more corrupt than their former colonial masters. We have learned that aggregate amounts of foreign aid are no index of successful development in the recipient nation. And we have learned that when people are actually given the choice, they inevitably opt for the kinds of economies that allow them to function as free economic actors.

"Yet the sponsors and authors of the Damascus document seem wholly innocent of all this. Twenty years ago there may have been an excuse for such extraordinary ignorance of empirical reality. But now there is no excuse. One is ignorant of these things either because one is culpably lazy and not paying very much attention or because one finds truth ideologically unsettling. In either case, the result is bad news for the poor, for whom one had supposedly 'opted.'"

### *Ideology and Christian Faith*

As shoddy and stale as the socio-economic analysis in "The Road to Damascus" may be, much more troubling is the statement's equation of its ideology with the Christian faith. Morally troubling also is the role of Sojourners and the Center of Concern in all of this. They claim theirs was only the modest role of coordinating publicity for a statement that is the product of years of indigenous study by Christians in seven Third World countries. We tried to believe that but were forced to give up. The ideas and jargon in the document are the conventional cant routinely issuing from organizations such as Sojourners and the Center of Concern. In a world where socialist ideology and practice are being daily discredited, it is more probable that the language of "The Road to Damascus" was crafted in First World enclaves of true believers in an idea that is comatose, if not dead. This, it might be noted, may indeed be an instance of imperialism. Playing on Lenin's title, it could be called "Radicalism: The Last Stage of Imperialism."

By agreeing to sign this strident and thoroughly wrongheaded polemic, it would seem that thousands of Christians in poor countries have allowed themselves to be ambushed by ideological imperialists who are not above exploiting the poor to amplify their own discontents. That is very sad, and one can almost sympathize with more responsible Christians in this country who wanted to let it pass in silence. When, however, a substantial number of Christians declare a substantial number of other Christians to be excommunicate, attention must be paid.

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## The Revolution Stops Here

John Spong, the Episcopal bishop of Newark, New Jersey, succeeded in drawing considerable attention to himself a while back with the publication of *Living in Sin?* In that book and subsequent statements he has, with relentless self-appreciation, declared that he is an absolutely open-minded prelate. He bravely condemns the trials and inquisitions by which the church has in the past repressed the healthy juices of good, clean sex. The favorite bishop of Integrity, the Episcopalian gay-activist group, Spong has come out foursquare for the ratification of homosexual marriages and other creative family arrangements. Traditional rules are breezily dismissed as the hang-ups of people who refuse to recognize that Christianity is but a human construct of symbols and myths that must evolve in order to "come to terms with our revolutionary new situation." All the more reason for the bishop's embarrassment over a recent ecclesiastical trial, the first in the 113-year history of the diocese of Newark. At least we hope the bishop is embarrassed. In that trial George G. Swanson was found guilty of conduct unbecoming a member of the clergy. What could possibly warrant such a verdict in the so very permissive diocese of Newark? Surely not abandoning his wife for another woman, or setting up housekeeping with his boyfriend, or publicly denying the deity of Christ. All those things are amply covered by the bishop's blessing of accommodations to our allegedly revolutionary age. No, it seems that Fr. Swanson publicly accused the bishop of greedily wanting to get his hands on $575,115, the insurance money that Swanson's parish received after its church burned down in 1986. Sodomy, adultery, and heresy are all very well, but when it comes to matters of real importance—like money and public criticism of John Spong—the revolution has clearly gone too far. Perhaps in his next book the very open-minded bishop of Newark will find some good words for selective repression, even for ecclesiastical trials.

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## While We're At It

■ A host of controversies in the churches swirl around the use of "inclusive" language, especially in liturgy. Gender relations, sexual oppression, hierarchy vs. autonomy, textual authority vs. contextualization—all become embroiled in the

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newspeak of "inclusivity." About the best, most balanced, even, we dare to say, the most inclusive discussion of these disputes is Alvin F.Kimel's "The Holy Trinity Meets Ashtoreth: A Critique of 'Inclusive' Liturgies." Originally published in the *Anglican Theological Review,* the essay is available in pamphlet form for $2, including postage, from Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Ave, Suite 400, NY, NY 10010 ($1.50 per for five or more copies).

■ In abortion debates the alternative of adoption is frequently raised, and is frequently dismissed as an "unrealistic" remnant from the way the world used to be. *Adoption Factbook,* however, makes clear that adoption continues to be a large and important part of American life. Libraries and the public-policy community need to have this 277 page manual filled with facts and reports on programs that work. It is published by the National Committee for Adoption (Mrs. George Bush, Chairman) and is available for $39.95, plus $2 postage, from the Committee at 1930 Seventeenth St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009.

■ *Evangelicals and Foreign Policy* is out, in the event that you were waiting for it. Essays by Alberto R. Coll, Dean C. Curry, James Davison Hunter, and your editor. Michael Novak describes it as "[a] splendid introduction to political realism, and a magnificent account of the 'return from exile' and into mainstream politics of some of America's most energetic citizens." Mark Amstutz of Wheaton calls it "essential reading." The fact that they're friends doesn't mean that they're not telling the truth. Edited by Michael Cromartie, *Evangelicals and Foreign Policy* is available for $10.95 from the Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1030 Fifteenth St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.

■ In the last decade and more there has been a resurgence of interest in law and religion. One reason is that the free exercise clause of the First Amendment has come under increasing pressure by expansionist government regulation. Another reason is that there is a growing awareness of the difficulties in maintaining the legitimacy of law apart from moral and religious grounding. A good way to stay on top of discussions in this field is by attending to the *Journal of Law and Religion.* For further information, write the journal at Hamline University School of Law, 1536 Hewitt Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104.

■ We don't know quite what to make of it, but it would seem to be not without cultural significance. Each year New York State reports the most popular names given babies. In the past year, Michael and Jessica held onto first place, but Brian and Danielle fared poorly. For boys, Michael has been at the top of the chart for seventeen years straight. Edging out Robert for tenth place, John staged a comeback; and Anthony, knocking Brian off the chart, rallied. For girls, Jessica is at the top for the second year, while Danielle was replaced by Samantha. The most popular boys' names: Michael, Christopher, Matthew, Daniel, Joseph, Andrew, Steven, Anthony, David, and John. For girls: Jessica, Amanda, Ashley, Jennifer, Sara, Nicole, Stephanie, Christine, Samantha, and Melissa. The question: Why is it that all the boys' names are biblical or of religious significance, while the girls' names tend to be merely cute? One answer: Parents take boys more seriously than girls. Another answer: Girls are cuter than boys. The reader may have a better answer.

Sources: Feminist Faith, *Christianity and Crisis,* December 11, 1989. Marin on King, December 25, 1989. Weigel, *American Purpose,* November 1989. Naming, *New York Times,* December 28, 1989.

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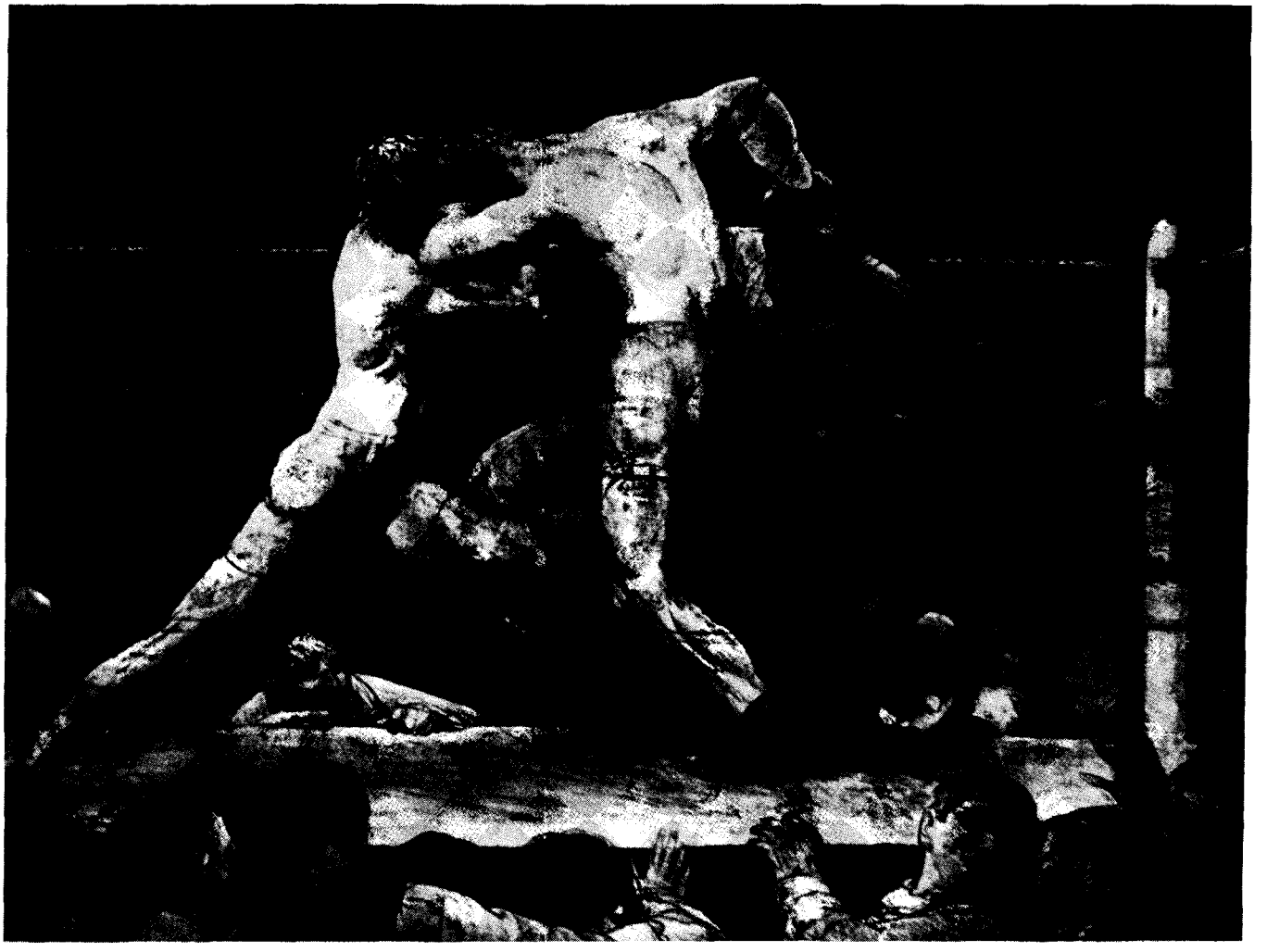
George Bellows, A Stag at Sharkey's, 1917.



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